HONDURAS AND THE NEW CANADIAN IMPERIALISM: RE-ASSESSING CANADIAN FOREIGN POLICY MYTHOLOGIES

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation argues that Canadian foreign policy has undergone a significant shift in the past two decades that coincides with the consolidation and internationalization of Canadian capital. That shift is manifest most dramatically in an escalation of the Canadian military presence abroad and the ends to which the country's increasingly militarized foreign policy are bent towards, particularly its cooperation with the machinery of U.S. imperialism to secure the conditions for profitable growth for Canadian capital invested in the Global South.

This project builds that argument by examining in detail the case study of Canadian state relations with Honduras, especially following the June 2009 *coup d'etat*, in light of significant investment of Canadian capital in that country. It demonstrates the extent to which Canada has supported a military dictatorship since 2009 that has engaged in widespread repression of dissent, abuse of human rights, and anti-democratic practices. It also highlights the fact that the social movement that has been targeted by the dictatorship was working towards political and economic reforms in Honduras that would have posed a threat to the profits of Canadian companies invested there.

As such, this project locates Canadian policy towards Honduras as fitting into a long history of colonialism in that country, with Canada taking a role previously held by Spain, Great Britain and the United States, that is undermining Honduran democracy and social development for the sake of Canadian companies' profits. It is suggested that this dynamic, examined in detail in the Honduran case, is reflective of the wider shift in Canadian political economy and foreign policy.

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It would require a second dissertation to properly acknowledge all of the people who made the completion of this work possible. Notwithstanding, then, the many people I will inevitably leave out, I wish to offer particular thanks to my parents, Bob and Brenda Shipley, whose generosity, support and strength carried me through the toughest moments of this long process, and who are greater inspirations to me than either of them suspect. My brothers and sister and their families, though far away geographically, are never far from my thoughts. I am particularly lucky at my age to have two adoring and adored grandparents, Walter and Dorothy Jones, who weathered series health crises over the past few years to emerge stronger and sweeter than ever. Gramma will be glad to know that one of the final citations in this dissertation was taken from a newspaper article that she clipped out for me. Not to be forgotten, I have no doubt that the determination I discovered in the process of finishing this work was handed down from my late grandmother Edith, mother of ten children in rural Manitoba, who must have certainly been one of the most patient women in the world to have put up with that much Shipley under one roof! She is remembered as a strong-willed and incredibly sharp, perceptive woman; I would like to think that she would have taken great interest in the arguments I present here, and I hope we will be granted a chance to talk about it someday.

The work itself would not have been possible without the guidance and mentorship of my principal supervisor David McNally, who helped me navigate seven years of academia, politics, activism, and the very complicated spaces in between. His influence on my work is unmistakable, and the support he has given to my intellectual development is unparalleled. I am also deeply indebted to Greg Albo, who has kindly

and consistently encouraged my progress and challenged me to be rigorous, reading drafts of papers, writing letters on my behalf, and publishing my work when it was ready. I am grateful to Roddy Loeppky who, especially when I was new to the process and more than a little overwhelmed, was always up for a beer and a reminder to stay the course. I owe special thanks to Abigail Bakan and Anna Zalik who joined my defence committee as external examiners and were generous in their feedback and commentary on my thesis.

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It is standard procedure to thank one's host institution for its support over a project like this, though I do so with some qualifications. I am very grateful to the hard working staff who have helped administer day-to-day affairs at York University; Judy Matadial, Angie Swartz, Lucy Cozzolino, Lil Di Giantommaso, Nisa Lawson and especially the wonderful, kind, and very funny Marlene Quesenberry, have all been

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On the other hand, I would like to thank, in the broadest possible strokes, the membership, executives and activists – past and present – of CUPE 3903, the union representing contract faculty and teaching and research assistants at York. It is only as a result of the hard, often thankless, work that 3903ers have put in over decades of struggle against York University, that I have had access to health benefits, a living wage, and some degree of funding for conferences and professional development. I leave York University with tens of thousands of dollars in student debt, but that amount would have been considerably greater if I had not been somewhat protected by CUPE 3903. In spite of its many internal troubles, divisions, and contradictions, it has been a formative and instructive space for me and I am truly grateful for the support it has brought me, and the

bonds that I built over three long months on strike in 2008-09. Sincere thanks, then, go out to everyone in 3903 – even those with whom I've vociferously disagreed over the years – for making my completion of a Ph.D. materially possible.

In 3903 and elsewhere, I have been very fortunate over seven years in Toronto to connect with a group of really excellent people who have made the day-to-day business of life infinitely richer and helped me avoid the isolation of academic work. Among them, I would like to thank especially Ryan Toews, Josh Moufawad-Paul, Sarah Hornstein, Cory Jansson, and Simon Granovsky-Larsen, all of whom, at one time or another, have demonstrated just how much better life can be when it is shared with good friends. I am proud to have relied on the support and comradeship of such solid people and I can only hope that I have offered the same in return. If not, I am sure we can negotiate some sort of remuneration, in board game tokens, communist literature, cat food, kale chips, or Cuban cigars, as the case may be! I should also like to acknowledge my 'extended family' from Winnipeg, Gareth Williams, Ryan McVeigh, Michael Kirkpatrick, Scott Rutherford, Marc Roy, and especially Matt McLennan; their influence on my life and my work can be measured directly in the person I have become over the decades of our friendship. Matt's son Leo will surely be regaled with many readings and re-readings of this dissertation, as soon as I finish formatting it with clip art and large, comic sans font.

Finally, but most importantly, this dissertation is anchored by the countless Hondurans – students, taxi drivers, doctors, construction workers, activists, academics, artists, friends – that I have met and interviewed over the past four years. I was able to connect with those people thanks to the organization Rights Action; Grahame Russell,

Annie Bird, and especially Karen Spring. Karen has lived and worked in Honduras since 2009 and her solid, mature, and sincere commitment to working with the social movement there has meant that she has been able to build trusting relationships with people across the country. Through Karen, I met and built relationships with Honduran activists for whom I have the profoundest respect and from whom I have drawn immeasurable inspiration. Time and time again, they have sat and talked with me, patiently explaining the dynamics that, for them, are often of grave and immediate consequence. Their voices come out often in the pages that follow and their generosity with a researcher who had little to offer them in return was humbling. As I note in the text, the movements that they have built offer a glimpse of what better societies could look like and, indeed, they give meaning to the analysis that I present by offering a constant reminder of why it matters. My life and my understanding of the world have been forever marked by the relationships I have built in Honduras and I dedicate this work to all of those people, with the hope that some of it will of use to them in their ongoing struggle.

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CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

In 2005, four years into the Canadian occupation of Afghanistan, Canadian Forces General Rick Hillier surprised a gathering of reporters by reminding them that the job of the Canadian military was "to kill people."[1] The frankness of this admission, and the surprise it elicited, suggested that dramatic changes were afoot in a Canada that had long imagined itself a great peacekeeper. By 2009, it had emerged that Canada was deeply implicated in the torture of detainees in its Afghan occupation, and the ruling Conservative government actually closed the Canadian Parliament early that year in order to avoid discussion of the torture scandal. That same ruling party has yet to answer these allegations in Parliament but managed to win its first majority government in 2011. In the meantime, Canada offered unflinching support to a violent military overthrow of the democratic government of Honduras in 2009, placing Canada at odds with almost every other state in the western hemisphere, and it has subsequently been that regime's greatest ally. In 2013, a journalist at the *Globe and Mail* reported on Canadian involvement in Africa and concluded that it did not look dissimilar from British and French colonialism:

> What do we call the thing Canada is doing in Africa? It involves our largest corporations, the federal government, public- and private-sector aid agencies, and sometimes the military. And their activities are increasingly connected, sometimes by choice, often by force of circumstance... Canada is no longer simply "doing business" or "providing aid" in Africa... [it has] become something like a colonial government.[2]

The *Globe and Mail* is anything but a leftist rag; that it would offer a critical comment on the emergent Canadian imperialism is a sure sign that Canada's role in the world is changing.

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[1] Rick Hillier, quoted in "Hillier surprised that many didn't know a soldier's job is to kill," *Calgary Herald*, Oct. 29, 2009.

[2] Doug Saunders, "Canada's African adventure takes a colonial turn," *The Globe and Mail*, Feb. 2, 2012.

Canadians – like their southern neighbours – have long been encouraged to believe that their state is a beacon of freedom and democracy for the world to emulate. While that discourse has been hard to sustain in the United States, it has stubbornly refused to disappear from the Canadian mainstream, where popular media and public perception still seems to reflect the belief that Canada is, more or less, one of the "good guys" in international affairs. Canada, according to this narrative, is a state that has perfected the arts of democracy and good governance, offers freedom to its citizens and refuge for foreigners who need it, and promotes peace, stability and human rights in the rest of the world. An astonishing 94% of Canadians think their country is well liked internationally and 84% believe Canada is a force for good in the world,[3] in spite of the increasing mobilizations of popular protest in foreign countries against Canadian policy.[4] In fact, the changes that have marked Canadian foreign policy over the past decade appear to many Canadians to reflect simply an increased sense of Canadian "self-confidence," as though Canada finally feels comfortable going out and asserting its good values in the world. The irony of a politics whereby "goodness" is militarized and hammered down upon the "less good" is, regrettably, lost in most of these assessments; though it appears that much of the international community is beginning to question that approach, if Canada's humiliating rejection for a seat on the U.N. Security Council in 2012 is any indication.[5]

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[3] Yves Engler, *The Black Book of Canadian Foreign Policy*, Black Point, Fernwood, 2009, p. 4.
[4] For instance, "Death to Canada" chants have become ubiquitous in Afghanistan, and folk songs in Guatemala regularly feature Canada as the chief antagonist. Jerome Klassen, "Introduction: Empire, Afghanistan and Canadian Foreign Policy," in Jerome Klassen and Greg Albo, ed., *Empire's Ally: Canada and the War in Afghanistan*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2013, p. 9.
[5] John Ivison, "Canada chose principle over popularity at UN," *National Post*, October 10, 2012.

Michael Ignatieff, political scientist and former leader of the Liberal Party of Canada, is among the most articulate Canadian imperial cheerleaders, despite his narrow disagreements with the ruling Conservative government. Consider his comments on a program for Canadian foreign policy in 2003:

> Peace, order and good government, and the institutions that anchor this creed in our national life, have been the guarantors of our national independence and our national distinctiveness. The success of this creed makes our country one of the most sought-after destinations for migration in the world. Our capacity to resolve our conflicts peacefully means that we have survived where many other multinational, multi-ethnic, regionalized societies have failed... I prefer "peace, order and good government" to "governance" as an organizing frame for Canadian activities simply because it articulates a specifically Canadian expression of what governance ought to be about: democratic institutions, federalism, minority rights guarantees, linguistic pluralism, aboriginal self-government and a positive, enabling role for government in economic and social development.[6]

From this glowing review of "Canadian values," which notably fails to comment on inequalities within Canada or Canada's place in the global political economy, Ignatieff concludes that Canada should endorse the doctrine of the "responsibility to protect" people from their own "failed states," a rhetorical turn that serves to justify all manner of international intervention:

> Canadian policy can assist with improving the institutional design and operation of governance. Where societies, in John Rawls' phrase, are "burdened" with ethnic conflict, religious hatred, or a bitter memory of civil war, we need to perfect a tool kit of preventive intervention: conflict resolution at the village and community level, political dialogue at the national level, constitutional change, in the form of devolution to empower disenfranchised regions or groups, and minority rights guarantees to end discrimination and injustice. No country has managed to put all of these elements of prevention – conflict resolution,

[6] Michael Ignatieff, "Peace, Order and Good Government: A Foreign Policy Agenda for Canada," DFAIT, Jules Leger Library, available at: http://www.international.gc.ca/odskelton/ignatieff.aspx

> political dialogue, constitutional change, together with economic assistance – into a coherent stand-by capability, bringing together NGO, government and professional capacities. That is a challenge we should seize as a country, since, as I have argued, we have comparative advantage in the politics of managing divided societies. Finally, in societies where conflict has reached the point of massacre and ethnic cleansing, we have a "responsibility to protect," and, with that, *a responsibility to intervene, if necessary, with military force.*[7]

Indeed, on the basis of his superficial, but sympathetic, assessment of Canada's commitment to "good government," Ignatieff claims that Canada has a responsibility to interfere considerably in other countries affairs and, ultimately, to intervene militarily when it decides that others are not meeting Canadian criteria for "good government."[8] His program, self-described as "muscular multilateralism," would see Canada take such pride in its purported successes that it would impose them on others. Indeed, the Canadian public is consistently presented with a version of Canada that imagines itself an enlightened and benevolent force that would help the rest of the world replicate its own success. Increasingly, however, the reality of Canadian policy looks radically different from the popular picture presented.

This dissertation will engage with the changes that have become manifest in Canadian foreign policy over the past two decades by building on the emerging literature that seeks to find the deep motivations for Canadian policy in a rigorous political economic analysis. Contrary to mainstream analyses that would locate the changes in Canadian policy by studying the different political parties and personalities of leaders,

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[7] Ignatieff, "Peace, Order and Good Government," (emphasis mine).

[8] Interestingly, the rhetorical pillars of Canadian foreign intervention that are peppered through orations like Ignatieff's – peace, freedom, democracy, stability – only feature in minor ways in Canada's stated foreign policy goals, which, today, typically emphasize free trade and security. For instance, Canada's foreign policy re-engagement with the Americas claims to be founded on the three pillars of "increasing economic opportunity," "strengthening security and institutions," and "fostering lasting relationships." See "The Americas: Our Neighbours, Our Priority," DFAIT, available at: http://www.international.gc.ca/americas-ameriques/index.aspx?lang=eng

and the electoral trends that see one or another fraction of the Canadian elite elected to power, this project will examine Canadian foreign policy as a long term process marked by continuities and changes that reflect not necessarily the changing of political leadership but the shifting class dynamics that animate the Canadian polity and state apparatus. That is, rather than imagining foreign policy as a product of the ideas of powerful individuals, this dissertation will take foreign policy to be a manifestation of the social relations embedded in the Canadian state. More concretely, it will view the Canadian state as being fundamentally representative of the interests of a uniquely Canadian capitalist class and, as such, it will take the changing exigencies of foreign policy to be reflections of the needs of that capitalist class, albeit mediated by a wide variety of other factors.

Applying this type of analysis to Canadian foreign policy will reveal that, having overseen the consolidation and concentration of Canadian capital into an influential bloc that now requires access to foreign markets in order to maintain profitability, the Canadian state has, increasingly since the end of the Cold War, taken on the role of a secondary imperial power in the global capitalist world order. That is, as Canadian capital has looked outward in search of new profits, the Canadian state has used its considerable resources to support that expansion and has successfully carved out significant space for Canadian capital to grow. That space, and the profits that come with it, has often been taken directly from communities in the Global South. This dissertation will demonstrate, in detail, how that process has played out in the context of Honduras, one state in which the Canadian imperial influence has been dramatically felt since a *coup d'etat* overthrew its democratic government in 2009. In effect, then, this project

offers a detailed look at one compelling case study in the new Canadian imperialism, on the premise that this study is representative of the broader dynamics of contemporary Canadian foreign policy.

Chapter 2 will establish the theoretical foundations for this project by providing an overview of the prevailing approaches to the study of Canadian foreign policy and political economy, locating my own position within the debates between political economists on the question of the Canadian capitalist class and applying those conclusions to the study of foreign policy. In particular, I will argue that the study of Canadian foreign policy must be informed by an understanding that the Canadian economy is *not*, as much of this tradition has argued since the 1970s, predominantly owned and controlled by U.S. capital. By contrast, I will assert that there is a concentrated Canadian capitalist class that not only controls most of the Canadian economy but has also, in fact, outgrown its borders and is rapidly expanding internationally. The implications are significant, insofar as this suggests that the Canadian state is not a pawn of U.S. capital but, rather, is responsive to the needs of Canadian capital. This chapter will draw out these theoretical claims and demonstrate why this understanding of Canadian foreign policy is more satisfactory than the dominant approaches. It will offer a brief re-reading of the history of Canadian foreign policy, based in this theoretical approach, that will explain the shift in the past two decades towards greater integration with the U.S.-led empire of capital as being part of Canada's strategy to maintain the growth and viability of Canadian capital in an increasingly volatile capitalist world market.

The remaining chapters will turn their attention to the particular case study at the heart of this project, beginning with an historical overview of five centuries of colonialism in Honduras. Chapter 3 will document the formation of Honduras in the genocide that was European conquest of the Americas, and it will provide a synthesis of the historiography of Honduras to demonstrate the long process of imposed underdevelopment to which Honduras has been subject since its founding. The purpose will be to demonstrate the continuities that cut across centuries of different imperial powers and different methods of empire, in order to effectively locate the new Canadian imperialism in that long history. Chapter 4 will focus on more recent Honduran history, placing a particular emphasis on the processes that established the contemporary class dynamics in Honduran society, in order to highlight the movements and struggles that resisted the imposition of neoliberalism and the role that U.S. imperialism played in ensuring its eventual victory. This point is significant, insofar as it is precisely the struggle against neoliberalism that has continued to motivate contemporary Honduran social movements, and it is those movements that Canada is working to undermine in its own imperial adventure in Honduras.

Chapter 5 will bring the narrative of Honduran history into the present, detailing the events that led to the 2009 *coup d'etat* and its violent aftermath. Drawing from original fieldwork in Honduras, I will offer here the first comprehensive academic analysis of the Honduran social movements that emerged in the late 1990s in opposition to neoliberalism and demonstrate the extent to which their popular struggle was interrupted by the coup that overthrew social democratic President Manuel Zelaya. This chapter will provide a thorough reconstruction of the coup itself and the unleashing of

state terror and political manipulation necessary to sustain the rule of the military regime, whose seizure of power provoked a social mobilization in opposition that was unprecedented in Honduran history.

That narrative will then be reviewed in light of Canada's reactions and responses to each new phase of the crisis. If the purpose of Chapter 5 is to lay bare the deep injustice that permeated every aspect of the coup, the purpose of Chapter 6 will be to demonstrate that Canada's reactions fell consistently on the side of injustice. What is more, this chapter will show that Canada had to work hard to do so; the Canadian state was one of the few allies that the Honduran military regime had, and in order to support that regime Canada had to categorically ignore critical reports from nearly every level of Honduran society that was not directly connected to the section of the Honduran ruling class that carried out the coup. This chapter will also document post-2009 developments, again drawing heavily from interviews and personal experience in Honduras, concluding that the social movements in Honduras remain more or less united in their opposition to the military government, even while conditions in the country have been deteriorating rapidly and as violence and impunity have become the standard.

The final substantive chapter will explain Canada's decision to consistently support the violent coup regime, against the wishes of an embattled popular social movement that has the support of an overwhelming majority of Hondurans, by detailing the extent of Canadian investment in that country, before and after the coup. Indeed, this chapter will demonstrate that Canadian capital found its interests threatened by the growing strength of social movements, seeking to create more just and equitable structures of governance in Honduras, and saw fit to line itself up with the Honduran far

right. In fact, as this chapter will show, Canadian capital and the Canadian state have actually ramped up their involvement in Honduras since the coup, as it is clear that Canadian investment in Honduras not only tolerates the right wing crackdown, it actually benefits from and relies upon it. This final point will plug back into the arguments introduced in this chapter and developed in the second chapter, demonstrating that Canada has actually constructed a foreign policy wherein imperialism and injustice are not just potential incidental factors but, indeed, are at its heart.

This analysis, as I will argue throughout, grows increasingly urgent as Canada's foreign policy becomes ever more deeply enmeshed and committed to its new role as an emerging imperial power. Indeed, while this project asserts that the shifting dynamics of Canadian policy are reflective of political-economic conditions, it does not imagine those conditions to be incontestable; that is, while I will reject the idea that policies are designed in the minds of individuals disconnected from their social and material conditions, it nevertheless remains fundamentally the case that policies are made by people who have organized themselves to engage in a political process. As such, those politics and processes can always be contested by organized social movements, and this dissertation is motivated by the need to rebuild the capacities of people and movements in Canada to contest the new direction that it is taking.[9]

[9] It is worth briefly noting that not all people and movements in Canada consider themselves "Canadian." Though the structures that would become the Canadian state were imposed upon Indigenous people by English and French colonizers, Indigenous nations never ceded their right to consider themselves nations and many do not associate themselves with the Canadian state. Some Quebecois people similarly consider their national allegiance to be to Quebec, rather than Canada. Many immigrants and migrants in Canada maintain a primary national allegiance outside of Canada and, furthermore, many activists from a variety of backgrounds refuse any association with Canadian nationhood. When this dissertation refers to "Canadians," then, it does so as a way of referring to all those people who live under the legal jurisdiction of the Canadian state, acknowledging that many would not self-identify as "Canadian."

There have arguably been moments when the prospects for popular intervention in the business of Canadian statecraft were better than they are today. Given this project's focus on Canadian policy in Central America, it is instructive to look at the work done by the Toronto-based Latin America Working Group (LAWG) and its associated civil society and activist organizations in the 1970s and 1980s, which included a range of groups that varied in their activist orientation, from the Victoria-based Canada-Honduras Information and Support Association (CHISA) to Canadian University Service Overseas (CUSO). These organizations were rooted in Canadian civil society; their members were activists, academics, journalists, students, left-liberal politicos, clergy and churchgoers, and transplanted Latin Americans who had come to Canada often as refugees from political violence. The solidarity work that groups like LAWG were able to mobilize was impressive, both in terms of the principled stand it took with respect to U.S. imperialism in Central America and insofar as that work appears to have made an appreciable impact on Canadian policy.[10]

LAWG and its associated organizations took a variety of actions to support movements in Central America that were struggling against the violent and reactionary forces that dominated most of the region in the 1980s, and that were working – with direct U.S. support – to undermine the revolutionary Sandinista government in Nicaragua. Speakers were brought from the region to tour Canada and speak about the dynamics of the regional wars, and Canadians were encouraged to travel to Central America on solidarity and support delegations; one particularly noteworthy example was

[10] The analysis that I offer here of the work of LAWG and associated groups is drawn from a series of interviews conducted in 2012 with former activists in those organizations. Notable among those interviews were: Alison Acker (February 10, 2012), John Foster (February 18, 2012), George Sorger (February 24, 2012), Chris Rosene (March 9, 2012), and Suzanne Dudziak (April 7, 2012).

a 1983 "Pilgrimage for Peace" launched by a group of Canadian nuns with the support of the broader solidarity movement. The "Pilgrimage" saw 11 women, primarily Protestant and Catholic sisters, travel to Honduras to establish a peaceful presence at the Nicaraguan border, to block Contra fighters from launching violent incursions from Honduras.[11] Though the Honduran government blocked them from getting off the plane at Toncontín Airport, the project garnered much critical media coverage and helped to raise the profile of the Contra wars in the Canadian mainstream; the spectacle of elderly nuns being detained on an airplane by heavily armed Honduran soldiers reflected poorly on the Honduran state and the U.S. occupation.[12]

Though this is only one example of the work that LAWG did, it is a useful case, insofar as it prompted a series of letters between some of the activists and then-Canadian Minister for External Affairs Allan MacEachen. LAWG's archives contained copies of a long correspondence between MacEachen and Sister Marilyn Matz, who told the minister:

> We would greatly appreciate an explanation of how the current Canadian aid program, particularly our government-to-government aid, is meeting the very basic and real needs of the Honduran people? This remains a very serious question for us and one of some urgency given current articles on the state of underdevelopment in that country and the very real toll this is taking on the vast majority who are the poor of Honduras. In light of the Honduran government's priority on military spending and the increase of human rights violations and internal repression, how does our aid program benefit the poor majority of Honduras?[13]

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[11] Walter Stefaniuk, "11 leave for Honduras on pilgrimage for peace," *Toronto Star*, December 4, 1983.
[12] "Religious Women's Pilgrimage for Peace Denied Entrance into Honduras," *Catholic New Times*, December 25, 1983.
[13] Sister Marilyn Matz, Letter from Religious Women's Pilgrimage for Peace to Allan J. MacEachen, February 2, 1984. Retrieved from Latin American Working Group Archives, Scott Library, York University. Reproduced as Appendix A.

MacEachen did not offer an answer that satisfied the sisters, but he did write a series of replies, and the fact that such an exchange took place was, itself, noteworthy. Similar exchanges between the solidarity activists and high-profile Canadian politicians continued throughout the 1980s and even into the early 1990s. Indeed, a number of officials in the Canadian state apparatus were actually convinced to offer their support to the solidarity movement; some of LAWGs petitions feature names of Canadian Members of Parliament, like Bill Blaikie, Lloyd Axworthy, Dan Heap and Stan Keyes.[14]

The efforts of Canadians in solidarity was noticed in Honduras, both by the movements that were working with Canadian activists and by the Honduran media which, for instance, printed open letters of opposition to the virtual military government in Honduras signed by Canadian MPs[15] and reported on the presence of North American left activists in the country as Hondurans grew more and more disillusioned with the U.S. occupation in the 1980s.[16] Activists who are, today, among the most prominent figures in the Honduran resistance movement were regularly brought to Canada to speak to gatherings of Canadian civil society organizations which included public officials. Groups like LAWG and CHISA marshalled their communities' resources to bring Hondurans like Juan Almendares and Gladys Lanza to travel across Canada on speaking tours; these moments of solidarity are remembered fondly by the Canadians who

[14] "Asesinato de lideres sindicales Hondureños provoca gran desilusion e indignación en Canada," Undated Open Letter to Honduran President Rafael Callejas, reproduced as Appendix B.
[15] "Carta Abierta de Cuidadanos Canadienses al Gobierno, Fuerzas Armadas y Pueblo de Honduras En Relación a la Campaña de Amenazas y Calumnias en Contra del Dr. Ramón Custodio y CODEH," *El Tiempo*, December 14, 1988.
[16] "Activistas izquierdistas de EE.UU. en gira por Honduras," *La Tribuna*, November 3, 1984.

organized the events and by the Hondurans who were given space to build support for their movements, often speaking directly to members of the Canadian political elite.[17]

That this work had an effect on Canadian policy speaks both to the effective work that groups like LAWG were doing, and to the fact that the Canadian state was, at that time, in a position to be affected by civil society organizing. LAWG was able to resist becoming reliant on government funding, giving it a certain degree of autonomy, and it produced some of the most reliable and well-documented research on the region. There was, then, good reason for the Canadian political class to pay attention to LAWG's work.[18] That said, the success of groups like LAWG must be contextualized and understood to have been contingent on a particular configuration of the Canadian state that did not feel its interests would be unduly compromised by accommodating some of that activist work. That configuration has changed dramatically, and it is instructive to consider Liisa L. North's assertion in 1990 that "the Canadian government can and should do more to assist Central Americans to construct more just and peaceful societies."[19] It was at precisely that moment that the space in Canada for progressive civil society to influence foreign policy was being closed and, upon reflection, North's appeal can be read as a rather prescient and unheeded warning of things to come.

At the same time, this should not lead us to a kind of fatalism with respect to the prospects for activist work. Much is to be learned from the experience of LAWG and, as

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[17] I conducted interviews with a number of former LAWG activists who described the organizing of the speaking tours and the solidarity efforts, and I also interviewed Juan Almendares and Gladys Lanza, who expressed appreciation and warmth towards the Canadian movements that supported their work in the 1980s while simultaneously lamenting the relative decline in the strength and cohesion of such solidarity work today. Interviews with Suzanne Dudziak (April 7, 2012), John Foster (February 18, 2012), Gladys Lanza (May 7, 2012), Juan Almendares (May 4, 2012.)

[18] Interview with John Foster, February 18, 2012.

[19] Liisa L. North and CAPA, *Between War and Peace in Central America: Choices for Canada*, Toronto, Between the Lines, 1990, p. 17.

I will argue in this dissertation, there is an urgent need for a new mobilization of activism confronting the Canadian state and its new imperial politics. The reconfigured Canadian state may necessitate different strategies of resistance from those employed in the 1980s, but there can be no question that some kind of organized, collective response will be the only way for progressive forces to intervene and interrupt the new Canadian imperialism. This dissertation, then, represents both a critical intervention in the understanding and analysis of Canadian foreign policy at a crucial moment of transformation. It is also a call to action, for Canadian activists and academics alike, to take a stand against a set of policies that are doing immeasurable harm to those people towards whom they are directed and, as I will argue in my conclusions, to Canadians themselves. This project is informed by many long hours of conversations with activists in Honduras – teachers, electricians, taxi drivers, parents, children, artists, lawyers, farmers – who have found themselves struggling for justice against a constellation of powerful forces that includes Canadian businesses and the Canadian state. Those conversations instilled in me the gravity and urgency of building a coherent and committed opposition to Canadian imperialism; it is my hope that their voices will speak the loudest in the pages that follow, and will help to inspire the resurgent opposition that is so sorely needed.

NOTE ON METHODOLOGY

It is worth briefly describing how I came to have those conversations, so as to make clear my own place in the narrative and analysis that follows. I was in Guatemala in 2009, when the Honduran coup took place, and while it only garnered minor reports in the North American media, it was front-page news in Central America for weeks. In Guatemala, then-President Álvaro Colom was, himself, worried about the prospect of a

right-wing coup against his own government, and his was among the many governments in the region that demanded the immediate reinstatement of Zelaya. I travelled to Honduras shortly thereafter to support the peaceful resistance to the coup, as part of a Rights Action delegation led by Grahame Russell and Karen Spring. At the time, I had not intended to centre my dissertation research on Honduras; instead, my presence there was primarily as a journalist and I wrote a number of reports based on interviews and participant observation at that time, including a series of articles during the coup-sponsored "election" process in November 2009 for *Canadian Dimension*.[20] These experiences were formative in my understanding of the Honduran situation, and I draw from some of those experiences in this dissertation.

After two such visits, each motivated primarily by the intention of writing journalistic pieces on what was happening, I realised that what was happening in Honduras was demonstrating precisely the argument I wanted to make about the new Canadian imperialism. As such, I re-designed my dissertation project to put the Honduran case study at the centre. In so doing, I was advised by Liisa North to contact the former members of LAWG to contrast their experiences with the Honduran movement in the 1980s with the current situation. After completing a thorough ethics review through the Faculty of Graduate Studies at York University, I did my first official interviews with former LAWG activists over several months in 2012. I conducted most of these interviews in person in Toronto, though three were conducted over lengthy email exchanges, since many of the former LAWG members no longer live in Southern Ontario. I was very fortunate to connect, through Liisa North, with Cease Levo, who was able to help me contact the people I went on to interview. In the meantime, I also stayed

[20] Tyler Shipley, "Una Frasa, Una Pantomima," Canadian Dimension, November 26, 2009.

in touch with people I had connected with in Honduras, and conducted a few interviews over email and skype with them in 2011.

In 2012, I made a third trip to Honduras, where I spent three weeks doing exhaustive interviews with people from a wide variety of Honduran civil society. Unlike my earlier interviews, these were conducted for the specific purpose of this dissertation project and so were directed more to the problem of Canadian imperialism in particular. I completed an ethics review for these interviews which highlighted the fact that, although many of the people I interviewed do face serious danger from the forces of repression in Honduras, no one that I directly quote in the dissertation was placed in any *greater* danger for having spoken to me.[21] Over those three weeks, I travelled with Karen Spring, who acted as organizer and facilitator for my interviews, and also did on-the-fly translation so avoid any miscommunications that might have resulted from my imperfect Spanish. As a result of Karen's many years of mature and consistent solidarity work in Honduras, she has become a trusted and respected ally to the social movement and, as a result, my connection to her gave me access to the movement in a much more intimate way than I might have otherwise had. In addition to doing official interviews, we also spent long evenings socializing informally with and among people connected to the social movement and, as such, I was able to gain a much more nuanced understanding of the dynamics at play. Perhaps more importantly, I strengthed my social connection to the movement; in 2012, I met or got re-acquainted with many people whom I have remained in touch with. In fact, I conducted several followup interviews over email and skype upon my return to Toronto in June 2012. My personal connections with people

[21] Many of the people I interviewed acknowledged the danger that they face as a result of their involvement in the social movement and, in the months following our interviews, some of those people have indeed been targeted for repression.

struggling against injustice in Honduras were a constant reminder of why this project was important and kept me motivated to complete it even when I was a long way from Honduras and from the sense of urgency that pervaded my time there. I can only hope that the following pages will convey that urgency as much as I, myself, felt it.

CHAPTER TWO – THE NEW CANADIAN IMPERIALISM

The central project of this dissertation will be to advance an underdeveloped component in the growing literature that assesses the political economy of Canadian foreign policy. In particular, this project will insist that Canada has emerged since the end of the Cold War as an imperial power, a secondary component in a capitalist world order dominated by U.S. military and political hegemony. That is, unlike much contemporary Canadian political economic analysis, I will argue *not* that Canada is dependent on the U.S. and therefore unable to carve out an independent foreign policy but, rather, that Canada is its own imperial actor that chooses to line itself up with projects of U.S. imperialism for the benefit of its own ruling classes. To the extent that the objectives of Canadian capital are linked into the broader project of imposing a global neoliberal order, then, the Canadian state has an interest in deepening its connection to the apparatus of U.S. power. At the same time, Canadian capital is in competition with other blocs of capital, U.S. or otherwise, for access to the profits made possible by that neoliberal order. As such, Canadian capital – and by extension the Canadian state – finds itself both cooperating and competing with the United States and the claim that Canada is simply a U.S. dependency does not hold up. This chapter will offer a brief overview of the literature that seeks to understand Canadian foreign policy in light of a political economic analysis and locate the present study within that literature, before turning to the particular case study – Canadian policy towards Honduras – that will form the central pivot of this project.

WHY POLITICAL ECONOMY?

This chapter will review the literature of Canadian political economy and locate a position within it; from there, the rest of this dissertation will employ its methodological

premises in the examination of Canadian foreign policy in Honduras. This decision is informed by a wide engagement with the dominant intellectual strands in Canadian politics and international relations which offer a variety of useful tools for understanding particular phenomena, but rarely provide satisfactory analyses of the broader political, social, and economic dynamics that animate the contemporary world. This is primarily because the goal of political economy is to understand the deep roots of various phenomena, rather than simply assessing their superficial manifestations. Furthermore, the political economy approach has, especially in its more progressive expression, sought not just to understand the world but also to intervene in it. As Wallace Clement and Leah Vosko explain in the introduction to *Changing Canada: Political Economy as Transformation:*

> Progressive political economy embodies "uncommon sense." It seeks to abandon the common-sense view that certain things (e.g. capital or markets) and social and economic formations (e.g. capitalism) are irreducible rather than relational and always in process or flux. Political economy aims to trouble and challenge conventional ways of framing issues, in particular, in the present era, the neoliberal paradigm and its project. From a progressive political economy perspective, objects and subjects of study taken to be fixed or static and unproblematic in the empiricist and positivist traditions of political science and neoclassical economics are conceived dialectically. They are understood as internally contradictory, opening space for analyzing profound efforts at mediation, for identifying the forces of stability as well as change, and ultimately for the possibility of social transformation.[22]

Indeed, then, if political economy seeks to truly understand the prospects for transformation, it eschews the notion that analysis can be value-free. Clement and Vosko add that this theoretical approach "is motivated by values such as social justice" and

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[22] Wallace Clement and Leah F. Vosko, ed., *Changing Canada: Political Economy as Transformation*, Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003, p. xiii.

makes no attempt to conceal this; rather, in foregrounding those values, it offers a more transparent framework for its understanding of the world and the goals behind the work it produces.

My decision to work within the political economy framework is motivated most powerfully by the persistent and growing reality of radically unequal levels of wealth, power, and privilege both within individual states and across the international community. These profound inequalities are empirically indisputable and are articulated well by David McNally:

> In a world in which more than two billion people struggle to survive on $2 a day or less, the planet's wealthiest people – represented by the 16.5 percent of global households with more than $100,000 to invest – watched their assets soar 64 percent, to $84.5 trillion since 2000. The vast bulk of that wealth resides in the portfolios of millionaire households. Although they comprise just 0.7 percent of the globe's total households, these millionaire households now hold over a third of the world's wealth.[23]

These profound inequalities have been consistently ignored, underemphasized, or misunderstood by mainstream social science analysis outside of the political economy tradition.[24] This is particularly notable in the realms of international relations and foreign policy studies, where most mainstream analyses struggle – with limited success – to explain the systematic domination of certain states and peoples by others without actually

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[23] David McNally, *Global Slump: The Economics and Politics of Crisis and Resistance*, Oakland, PM Press, 2011, p. 44-45. There is a vast literature on the astonishing level of inequality within and across the capitalist world, and similar evidence can be drawn from, among others, Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, Toronto, Vintage Canada, 2007. See also Joel Bakan, *The Corporation: The Pathological Pursuit of Profit and Power*, Toronto, Penguin, 2004.

[24] For instance, the entire discipline of neoclassical economics, which is so hegemonic that it is typically taught simply as "economics," has consistently failed to adequately understand or predict the very phenomena it takes as its central object of study. Instead, it has functioned to overcomplicate, obfuscate and misdirect attention from the otherwise relatively straightforward dynamics of class and accumulation under capitalism. McNally makes this point in *Global Slump* and elsewhere, and the claim is forcefully and clearly articulated by heterodox economists in Robert Chernomas and Ian Hudson, *Social Murder and Other Shortcomings of Conservative Economics*, Arbeiter Ring Publishing, Winnipeg, 2007.

speaking directly to that domination or naming it "imperialism."[25] Indeed, they assign themselves a task that becomes increasingly difficult as the visible manifestations of those asymmetrical relationships become ever more vivid and tragic.[26] Political

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[25] Different traditions within the IR discipline deal with this contradiction differently. Realists pay little attention to global inequality outside of the paradigm of inter-state rivalry over power. Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, Reading, Addison-Wesley, 1979. Liberal IR, sometimes labelled 'idealism,' sees the uneven distribution of wealth as a product of failed institutions, and argues that realist policies of power maximization actually undermine the capacity for global cooperation and the construction of institutions that would alleviate poverty and inequality. M. Doyle, *Ways of War and Peace*, New York, W.W. Norton & Co., 1997. Neoliberal IR theory, like liberalism, asserts that inequality can be 'fixed' by institutions, but puts a primary emphasis on the market as the institution that will solve poverty and inequality, despite evidence that free market capitalism is, in fact, a primary cause of inequality. Neorealists argue that the push for free markets should be tempered by a focus on state security in a context of global anarchy and terrorist threats, offering little to the discussion of wealth distribution. M. Mandelbaum, *The Ideas That Conquered the World*, New York, Public Affairs, 2002. To the extent that mainstream IR theory accepts alternatives to these approaches, they fall into a variety of categories that are loosely associated with the Marxist tradition; historical sociology and social constructivism focus their attention on social norms and the structures of social behaviour; post-positivism critiques the very foundations of mainstream IR's claims to knowledge; feminist IR insists upon a gendered reading of inequality; and postcolonialism approaches IR from the perspective of those who have traditionally had the rules and norms of international affairs imposed on them, rather than developed from within. These latter approaches offer significantly more than the mainstream positions, and, indeed, much of the analysis that I will provide draws from those traditions, especially the feminist and postcolonial. They remain, however, more or less marginal to the dominant IR traditions. Finally, it is worth noting that more directly Marxist-inspired theories of IR (of which there is much overlap with feminist and postcolonial theory) remain present, if also marginal, in the discipline, most notably in the world-systems and neo-Gramscian schools. Robert Cox, *Production, Power and World Order*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1987. It is noteworthy that introductory IR textbooks – or the more honest ones among them – often admit that the Marxist tradition still provides the clearest and most analytically productive interpretations of capitalism. Consider this excerpt from a popular text: "Marx's social theory still retains formidable analytic purchase on the world we inhabit. The vast bulk of his theoretical efforts consisted of a painstaking analysis of capitalism as a mode of production and the basic elements of his account have not been bettered. Indeed, with the ever-increasing penetration of the market-mechanism into all aspects of life, it is arguable that Marx's forensic examination of both the extraordinary dynamism and the inherent contradictions of capitalism are even more relevant now than in his own time… while [mainstream approaches] portray world politics in ways which resonate with those presented in the foreign news pages of our newspapers and magazines, Marxist theories aim to expose a deeper, underlying – indeed, hidden – truth… that the effects of global capitalism are to ensure that the powerful and wealthy continue to prosper at the expense of the powerless and the poor." Stephen Hobden and Richard Wyn Jones, "Marxist Theories of International Relations," in John Baylis, Steve Smith and Patricia Owens, *The Globalization of World Politics: An introduction to international relations*, 4th ed., New York, Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 144-145.

[26] It would be impossible to choose any single example that could effectively demonstrate this point better than any other. The detail this project will provide on the situation in Honduras will present no shortage of vivid and tragic manifestations of the current global order. In lieu of plugging in one or another statistic demonstrating the profound inequality and injustice that permeates global capitalism, then, I will simply offer the words of a friend in Honduras, Edwin Espinal, who said to me in 2012: "We have so many problems in our community, the poverty, the violence, there's no jobs, there's no support. We want better wages, better jobs, we want the government to help us to fix our communities, the water systems and so on. But when we try to push back, to change it, we just get more and more violence, they send the gangs to kill

economy, and especially its left traditions, has much less resistance to employing the analytical concept of imperialism. McNally, again, offers a compelling definition here that captures the broad historical dynamics of imperialism and presents a helpful framework for this study:

> Imperialism is a system of global inequalities and domination – embodied in regimes of property, military power and global institutions – through which wealth is drained from the labour and resources of people in the Global South to the systematic advantage of capital in the North.[27]

As David Harvey rightly notes, effective definitions of capitalism and imperialism have a tendency to overlap, and this is, in part, because contemporary capitalism cannot function without recourse to imperial projects that satisfy capital's constant, harrowing need for dynamic growth.[28]

Of course, the claim that the contemporary world order is characterized by imperial relationships is significantly less controversial than it was when Cold War politics allowed the U.S. to justify its foreign adventures with the rhetoric of protecting its neighbours and allies from the "Soviet threat." However dubious those claims, the continued – arguably growing – impunity with which the U.S. intervenes around the world since the Cold War ended has made it more and more difficult to deny that it is an imperial power.[29] Positioned at the centre of global capitalism, its overwhelming

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people. Sometimes when they kill somebody, they don't just kill them, they cut their body into small pieces and spread them out around the whole neighbourhood so everyone will see, so everyone is scared. Can you imagine? And then it's hard to just get everyone to sit down in one place because they are scared. So you see the problems we have even just to organize to protect our community." Interview with Edwin Espinal, May 5, 2012.

[27] David McNally, "Canada and Empire," *New Socialist*, No. 54, 2005/2006, p. 5.

[28] David Harvey, *The New Imperialism*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2003, p. 26-33.

[29] Noam Chomsky, *World Orders Old and New*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1996. See also Chalmers Johnson, *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire*, New York, Henry Holt & Co., 2000. See also, V.G. Kiernan, *America: The New Imperialism from White Settlement to World Hegemony*, New York, Verso, 2005.

economic and military power gives it a disproportionate ability to set, shape, and break the rules of international politics as it sees fit, in the defence of what it defines as its national interest.[30] It has become widely accepted that Washington's willingness to exercise that power is an expression of global and hegemonic aspirations, which are no longer defined solely by the direct occupation of territory. Even in mainstream social science, this is increasingly, if grudgingly, understood as a new form of imperialism. While the Marxian political economy tradition has long maintained that imperialism is a central feature of capitalism,[31] that willingness to name the process as "imperialism" is now also taken up by mainstream observers like Niall Ferguson and Michael Ignatieff, who, arguably, celebrate the re-emergence of openly imperial politics. Ignatieff, as noted in Chapter 1, actually champions Canadian imperialism as a kind of "empire lite" and ran as a Canadian Prime Ministerial candidate in 2011.[32] It is notable that a prominent member of Canada's elite political class should produce one of the most significant intellectual justifications of contemporary imperialism, given Canada's emergence as a significant imperial power.

Nevertheless, mainstream discussion of imperialism is typically superficial in its understanding of the phenomena and/or celebratory of its supposedly progressive project. It is only in the political economy tradition – and especially its Marxist-inspired varieties – that one finds robust and productive debates around the fundamental nature of

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[30] Neil Smith, *American Empire: Roosevelt's Geographer and the Prelude to Globalization*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2004. See also David Harvey, *The New Imperialism*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2003. See also Peter Gowan, *The Global Gamble: Washington's Faustian Bid for World Dominance*, New York, Verso, 1999.

[31] Anthony Brewer, *Marxist Theories of Imperialism: A Critical Survey*, London, Routledge, 1980.

[32] Andrew J. Bacevich, *American Empire: The Realities and Consequences of U.S. Diplomacy*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2002. Naill Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World*, London, Basic Books, 2002. Michael Ignatieff, *Empire Lite: Nation Building in Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan*, New York, Penguin, 2002.

imperialism as well as normative critique of its harmful and destructive logic and consequences. Greg Albo, drawing from Robert Cox and Kees van der Pijl, pioneers of the neo-Gramscian school of International Relations theory, argues:

> International relations cannot be examined apart from the world market. Economic exchanges and political relations between states are formally carried out between equals under the 'law of value' and the 'rule of law' – in the interstate system. The world market, however, is characterized by 'uneven and combined development' and the world order is characterized by a hierarchy of states. The study of international relations, then, is the study of how imperialism – the structure of political and economic domination in the world system – operates between formally sovereign entities... in particular, it must study the way in which states and capitalist classes interact with global patterns of accumulation and trade and of military and diplomatic conflict.[33]

Honduras, central to the present study, provides a particularly useful example because it has been subject to many different forms of imperialism, ranging from the direct colonial occupation by the Spanish in the 16th century to the neo-colonial control exercised by Britain and the United States in the 19th century, to the regional domination of the Cold War American "sphere of influence" in the 20th century, all of which will be explored in detail in Chapters 3 and 4. In every case, in accord with McNally and Albo's comments above, political and especially economic power was held by the foreign metropole, assisted by a small cadre of local elite, and the levers of state power were twisted to the benefit of metropolitan conquerors and businesses seeking to exploit Honduran land and people in order to extract profits.

It is with this latter form of imperialism that Canada has increasingly aligned itself, and it is the political economy tradition that has offered the most satisfactory

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[33] Greg Albo, "Fewer Illusions: Canadian Foreign Policy Since 2001," in Jerome Klassen and Greg Albo, ed., *Empire's Ally: Canada and the War in Afghanistan*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2013, p. 245.

explanations of its dynamics. Dubbed "the new imperialism" in its 21st century variety by David Harvey, it is best exemplified by the vigorous – and often violent – imposition of neoliberal governance on post-Soviet and Global South states, by their metropolitan counterparts, in an effort to create new spaces of potential profits for overaccumulated capital. That is, as capital repeatedly finds itself unable to feed its desperate desire for dynamic growth – and is thus at risk of slipping into stagnation and slump – it must find "new" sources of profits. The political agents of capital, then, will create these new spaces by dispossessing states and communities – especially in the Global South – of whatever wealth they can, such that it can be snapped up and turned into profits for metropolitan capital.[34] The privatization of a state telecommunications company in Latin America, hitherto inaccessible to private accumulation, for instance, becomes a source of profitable investment for overaccumulated capital in the North, and if enough of these sorts of "fixes" can be created to keep capital growing, then recession and depression – which always carry the prospect of a truly dramatic collapse – can frequently be staved off.[35]

Naturally, this imperial project is usually undertaken with the cooperation of local agents, typically from some combination of the local oligarchy and/or the established political and military apparatus, which are willing to further the imperial project in order to, themselves, cash in on the benefits of working within what Ellen Wood calls the "empire of capital."[36] Indeed, the idea that capital, itself, is an imperial overlord rightly points to the fact that, in the context of increasingly worrisome crises, capital finds itself

[34] Harvey, *The New Imperialism.*
[35] McNally, *Global Slump*, 61-85.
[36] Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Empire of Capital*, Verso, New York, 2003.

compelled towards ever more coordinated forms of class struggle.[37] Neoliberalism, then, can be understood as a class project undertaken by global capital against the global working class, and its architecture (as manifest in the apparatus of international trade laws, the dictates of the WTO, IMF and World Bank, or in bilateral and multilateral free trade agreements) is designed to promote the interests of capital, whatever its nationality.

That said, as I will show in the Honduran case, imperialism always operates in specific circumstances, intervening in existing social and political formations, working to reshape them in unique ways by means of identifying and co-opting local allies and enlisting them in its cause. In that sense, it is a general phenomenon with a variety of distinct local manifestations. Moreover, the complexity of an imperialism that operates largely without direct territorial domination in an era of proliferating nation-states is that it necessarily involves intricate networks of collaboration and degrees of competition with the dominant imperial power. The dynamism of capitalism is propelled forward only by competition *between* capitals, even while global capital cooperates to manage its crises, and that competition is still regulated and shaped by politics and geography.

CANADIAN POLITICAL ECONOMY

Within the political economy tradition, of course, there exist a variety of strands. This project will concern itself with the most significant tradition in Canadian political economy – which I will refer to as left nationalism – and the smaller but growing response to that position, of which this dissertation is a part. These two schools offer competing visions of the Canadian political and economic landscape that necessarily interact with questions of Canadian foreign policy and imperialism, which I will draw out

[37] Peter Gowan, *The Global Gamble: Washington's Faustian Bid for World Dominance*, New York, Verso, 1999. See also David McNally, *Global Slump: The Economics and Politics of Crisis and Resistance*, Oakland, PM Press, 2011.

more concretely in the next section. The key question here is, fundamentally, whether Canada *could* be an imperialist power. For the left nationalists, Canada is understood as an economic dependency of the United States and, consequently, could not chart its own foreign policy even if it wanted to. It is in this sense that they earn the label "left nationalist," because their conclusions suggest that Canada needs first to assert its independence from the United States, in order to regain control of its own policies, which it could presumably then turn to better ends.

Two central figures in the left nationalist tradition are Kari Levitt and Mel Watkins, whose work in the 1970s built on the small but significant early Canadian political economy pioneered by Harold Innis. Levitt and Watkins developed and adapted Innis' early description of Canada as being caught in a "staples trap" in which it produced only raw materials. These were exported at low prices to be converted into more valuable commodities in Britain or the United States and sold back to Canadians at higher prices. Levitt and Watkins asserted that Canada had become a full-fledged dependency of the United States and that its burgeoning industrial sector had been, by the 1970s, "hollowed out" by a systematic sell-off to U.S. capital. In the book that defined the left nationalist position, Kari Levitt's *Silent Surrender*, Levitt argues:

> In Canada economic resources are allocated primarily to suit the requirements of large private corporations, and the majority of these are under United States control... The Canadian entrepreneurs of yesterday are the coupon clippers and hired vice-presidents of branch plants of today... Meaningful exercise of political democracy requires the freedom to fully shape Canadian institutions without fear of reprisal by vested corporate interest. This is doubly difficult when the power-base of those interests is located in the world's most nationalistic country with which we share 4,000 miles of backyard fence. [38]

[38] Kari Levitt, *Silent Surrender*, MacMillan, Toronto, 1970, p. 39-40.

In other words, Canadian industries were predominantly owned by U.S. firms, which, for Levitt and Watkins, implied that the Canadian economy was profoundly dependent on U.S. capital and, as such, could potentially be subject to the kinds of imperial discipline often imposed on Global South states.

This led them to the conclusion that Canada was a "rich dependency," caught in the dynamics that made Global South states beholden to the whims of U.S. policy, but uniquely privileged with pre-existing wealth that persisted in the commercial and financial sectors. Indeed, the key for Levitt and Watkins – and this argument was fleshed out by Daniel Drache, R.T. Naylor, Robert Laxer, Wallace Clement and others – was that the Canadian elite was maintaining its wealth by providing commercial and financial services to U.S. manufacturing firms, which had seized control of Canadian industry and pushed the rest of the Canadian capitalist class into the resource sector. As a result, these analyses concluded that Canada could not possibly chart its own policy programs independent of the United States since the Canadian economy relied so heavily on U.S. investment, which could be punitively withdrawn. In this version of Canadian dependency, the Canadian elite had to be understood as something like a *rentier* class, living largely from effective rent-seeking behaviour but typically not directly involved in capitalist production.

Not surprisingly, these conclusions translated, politically, into an assertion that Canada needed to regain control of its own capitalist development. This was the argument that has earned this group the sometimes-pejorative label "left nationalist," since it called for a nationalist project that would take back Canadian assets, such that Canada would have the independence to chart a course towards social democracy or

socialism. Levitt was aware of the way this was perceived on the left, and looked to distance herself from the accusation of "retrogressive flag-waving nationalism."[39] Nevertheless, her arguments reflected the logic that was regularly employed in Global South states that were caught in neo-colonial dynamics with the U.S. A number of Latin American countries, for instance, employed the import-substitution model in order to try to foster local capitalist development, ostensibly to establish the conditions whereby popular movements would be able to force the state to take a different direction if they chose to.[40] These were necessarily rooted in a kind of nationalistic project and typically mobilized nationalism in building popular support. But those projects also made some sense in the context of violent, colonial impositions. Anti-colonial nationalism was responding to more than just foreign ownership of local industry; it was an answer to a whole range of colonial practices and attitudes designed to assert the dominance of the colonizer over the colonized, politically, socially, economically, culturally, and in almost every other way imaginable.[41] Anti-colonial nationalism, then, to the extent that it is an appropriate response to colonial domination, is legitimate because it is responding to a totalizing colonial subjugation.

Thus, for a nationalist response to make sense, one had to accept the idea that Canada was a colonized dependency of the United States. But there were many in the Canadian political economy tradition who did not even accept the premise that the Canadian economy was fully dependent on the United States, and they would certainly

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[39] Levitt, 37.
[40] Import-substitution industrialization was a practice adopted by a number of social democratic governments in Latin America, prior to the imposition of neoliberalism, designed to foster industrial development such that foreign imports could be replaced by locally produced goods.
[41] For a sense of the history and dynamics of colonialism as a totalizing system, see Robert Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2001.

not buy the notion that Canada could be considered a colonized state. Indeed, to many observers, the comparison between Canada and Global South states was wrongheaded at best and offensive at worst. In 1975, Steve Moore and Debi Wells published a particularly useful critique of the left nationalist position in their short work *Imperialism and the National Question in Canada*, which asserted that Canada was, in fact, still significantly more powerful than most Global South countries and was part of a network of imperialist powers that were collectively dominating what was then called the 'Third' world. To Moore and Wells, the important question was whether Canada was being incorporated into the multinational network of imperial powers, centred around – but not necessarily subservient to – the United States, that were increasingly cooperating to turn the mechanisms of international organizations like the IMF and World Bank to collectively dominate smaller, peripheral states. Indeed, Moore and Wells rightly insisted that, viewed in a global rather than continental perspective, the dynamics between Canada and the United States did not look so different from those between the U.S. and the European imperial powers.[42] That is, while Moore and Wells did not deny that Canadian capital did, to some extent, "depend" on its relationships and connections to the U.S. economy, they insisted that it be understood as part of the broader dynamics taking place among imperial powers:

> "Dependence" on U.S. imperialism is a general trend. It is most recognizable in Canada because the trend is more developed here. But Europe is increasingly facing the same problem... the problem of "dependence" takes place within the context of inter-imperialist rivalry. Previously, "dependence" has only been a phenomenon relating to the status of colonial countries; but today, it is an increasingly important aspect of the relations between big and small imperialist powers. Imperialist countries

[42] Steve Moore and Debi Wells, *Imperialism and the National Question in Canada*, Toronto, 1975, p. 21-24.

> are increasingly dependent on one another through the nexus of world trade, multilateral investments in the Third World, and the interpenetration of capital among imperial countries.[43]

Indeed, Moore and Wells go on to document a variety of measures taken by imperial powers collectively to maintain the radically unequal character of global capitalism, and Canada consistently participated on the side of the imperial powers whether in the direct combining of capitals to dominate industries in the Global South, in the administration of international financial organizations like the World Bank that worked to maintain the architecture of global capitalism, or in its participation in military and diplomatic alliances with the imperial powers, as in the cases of NATO and NORAD.

> The key question is not whether Canada is a junior or senior partner (it is obviously a junior partner), but whether Canada is becoming an increasingly important component part of the imperialist system or whether Canada is being rejected by imperialism i.e., whether Canada is being forced into the status of a neo-colony. The above examples indicate that Canada is a part of the world imperialist system.[44]

Moore and Wells, then, were among the first to insist that Canada was becoming a secondary imperialist power, rightly (and presciently) noting that the particular dynamic of U.S. dominance over its imperialist rivals was, in the 1970s, reflective of the specificities of the U.S. project of global supremacy. That is, Canada was not uniquely or colonially subservient to the United States. Rather, it was one of a number of smaller imperial powers experiencing the assertion of U.S. power *within* the imperialist camp, an assertion that was directed primarily at the growing power of Germany and Japan, and that is well documented in Peter Gowan's *The Global Gamble*.[45] Indeed, Moore and

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[43] Moore and Wells, 28-29.
[44] Moore and Wells, 37.
[45] Gowan argues, quite convincingly, that the U.S. state worked to reconfigure the architecture of global capitalism and international relations in the 1970s to make itself an indispensable component of the

Wells' work was supported by several Marxist-inspired analyses, which insisted that Canada only appeared "underdeveloped" if compared to the United States. In a special issue of *Studies in Political Economy*, both Leo Panitch and David McNally critiqued the left nationalist position. Panitch argued that Levitt and Watkins failed to take seriously the internal class dynamics that made Canada profoundly different from Global South states; as a settler colony with well-established capitalist social relations directly plugged into the British – and later the U.S. – economy, Canada had a high-wage working class even while U.S. investment poured in.

> American capital came to Canada to secure raw materials, and to use Canada as a staging post for exports to the British Empire; it did not come in search of cheap labour (in which case it would have gone to Mexico or at least much more to Quebec than Ontario). But it also came... to realise surplus value, to secure the sale of manufactured goods in Canada's domestic market. This was manifestly a different situation from that in Latin America where American investment was overwhelmingly "supply oriented."[46]

McNally, for his part, offered a critique of Harold Innis' "staples" argument and noted that the emphasis that Levitt and Watkins had placed on the "staples" economy missed the more important point that Canadian capital in the resource sectors was expanding. For McNally, the claim that Canada was caught in a "staples trap" was an example of commodity fetishism, since it took the commodity itself as significant (i.e. it drew structural conclusions from the fact that the commodities in question were raw materials) rather than critically examining the process and relations of production, which

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functioning of global capitalism. According to Gowan and, later, David Harvey, this was a manifestation of inter-imperialist rivalry, undertaken in the context of a significant stagnation of U.S. growth in the 1970s and the concurrent rise of Germany and Japan as competitors that threatened to outpace the United States. Peter Gowan, *The Global Gamble: Washington's Faustian Bid for World Dominance*, New York, Verso, 1999.

[46] Leo Panitch, "Dependency and Class in Canadian Political Economy," *Studies in Political Economy* No. 6, Autumn, 1981, p. 18.

revealed a far more advanced capitalist dynamic than Innis – and later Levitt and Watkins – imagined. In their approach, as McNally argued, "it is the staple commodities themselves that dictate the patterns of historical development and social organization."[47] The presence of dynamic capitalist social relations in mining and energy, for instance, undermined the idea that Canada was being "underdeveloped" in the ways that dependency theorists had claimed was happening to Latin America. As McNally concluded:

> Reliance upon the staple thesis of Harold Innis has directed attention away from the kind of questions that should occupy centre stage in such a process of inquiry and analysis. It is high time that the fetishistic preoccupation with staples was abandoned in favour of a concentration on class formation and capitalist development in Canada.[48]

William Carroll would take up this point (indeed, he would later detail the emergence of "prairie capitalism" centred around resource extraction in Alberta, supporting McNally's critique of the "staples" thesis)[49] and he, along with Jorge Niosi and Bill Burgess, produced a series of crucially important studies, spanning the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s, on Canadian capitalism and Canadian corporate networks. That work consistently demonstrated that, by at least the mid-1980s, a Canadian national capitalist class controlled the majority of assets in the Canadian economy and was beginning to expand into foreign markets, a point which grew more and more clear as time passed.[50] The significance of this work, for the present study of Canadian foreign policy, was to demonstrate – in concrete terms – that there existed a uniquely Canadian capitalist class

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[47] David McNally, "Staple Theory as Commodity Fetishism: Marx, Innis and Canadian Political Economy," *Studies in Political Economy*, No. 6, Autumn, 1981, p. 46.
[48] McNally, "Staple Theory," p. 57.
[49] William K. Carroll, *Corporate Power in a Globalizing World*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 88-106.
[50] William K. Carroll, "The Canadian Corporate Elite: Financiers or Finance Capitalists?" *Studies in Political Economy*, No. 8, Autumn, 1982, p. 106-109.

which could exert its own pressure on the Canadian state; both domestic and foreign policy could be pursued for the purposes of Canadian capital, rather than simply being an extra arm for the United States. Niosi's comprehensive assessment of Canadian capitalism concluded:

> The Canadian bourgeoisie plays a dominant role in Canada, in the private sector, where it controls at least 70 per cent of all corporate assets, as well as in the public sector, where most government-owned corporations are run by this Canadian capitalist class and its key advisors... almost all of the families, individuals and partnership groups in control of large Canadian corporations have their roots in the nineteenth century or the period of [Canadian] economic expansion that lasted from 1896 to 1929. Canada does not belong to foreign capital; each year, between two thirds and three quarters of the investments made in the country are made by companies controlled by the Canadian bourgeoisie.[51]

I will return to the matter of actual Canadian foreign policy in this period, but for now it is worth emphasizing that what this scholarship did was establish – contrary to the Levitt-Watkins camp – that it was *possible* for Canada to pursue its own independent policies, a point made consistently and clearly by William Carroll.[52]

The debate has not, however, been put to rest. In fact, the late 2000s saw a significant re-emergence of the "left nationalist" analysis, in the work of Mel Hurtig, Mario Seccarachia, Andrew Jackson and especially Linda McQuaig, whose 2007 *Holding the Bully's Coat* is one of the most popular left analyses of Canada's foreign policy today. Fearing that Canada was slipping into a peripheral or colonial status, they argued that Canada had been sold out by a comprador elite that had allowed the U.S. to dominate Canadian industry and, as a result, to exert powerful influence over Canadian policy.

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[51] Jorge Niosi, *Canadian Capitalism: A Study of Power in the Canadian Business Establishment*, Toronto, James Lorimer and Co., 1981, p. 2, 16.
[52] William K. Carroll, *Corporate Power and Canadian Capitalism*, Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 1986.

Fundamental to this position was the question of "the freedom of action that Canada possesses," and the assumption that that freedom was limited by U.S. ownership of Canadian enterprises.[53] R.T. Naylor, still convinced that Canada was a "dependent" of the U.S., maintained in a 2006 update of his *History of Canadian Business* that dependence was "addictive" and that – once set into motion during a flawed transition from mercantilism to industrialization in the pre-war era – U.S. dominance of Canadian industry would never be reversed.[54]

If McQuaig is the most notable popular expression of this resurgent left nationalist position; its most important intellectual document is the 2007 collection *Whose Canada?* edited by Ricardo Grinspun and Yasmine Shamsie. To be sure, *Whose Canada?* is an impressive collection, which documents the deep integration of Canadian and U.S. economic and political affairs since 2001 and offers a much more complicated set of arguments than McQuaig, going far beyond simple bourgeois nationalism.[55] That said, across a series of essays that reflect a spectrum of critical and less-critical perspectives on Canadian foreign policy, the contributors consistently assert that Canada lacks "policy freedom" and insist that Canada needs a project to reassert its sovereignty and democracy. Bruce Campbell calls Canada a "colonial supplicant,"[56] Murray Dobbin claims that we are in the final stage of the "assimilation of the Canadian economy into

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[53] Mel Watkins, "A Staple Theory of Economic Growth," in G. Laxer, ed., *Perspectives on Canadian Economic Development*, Toronto, Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 96.
[54] R.T. Naylor, *History of Canadian Business 1867-1914*, Montreal and Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006.
[55] McQuaig's arguments presuppose a Canadian state that would behave differently – that is, better – if it weren't caught up in the necessity of facilitating U.S. imperialism. Thus she is committed to a politics that accepts the imagination of a "good" Canada that could be the "helpful fixer" it naturally wants to be. Linda McQuaig, *Holding the Bully's Coat: Canada and the U.S. Empire*, Toronto, Doubleday, 2007.
[56] Bruce Campbell, "Managing US-Canada Relations: An Alternative to Deep Integration," in Ricardo Grinspun and Yasmine Shamsie, ed., *Whose Canada? Continental Integration, Fortress North America and the Corporate Agenda*, Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007, p. 530.

that of the U.S.,"[57] and Elizabeth May, then-leader of Canada's Green Party, worries with Sarah Dover that "Canadian environmental law [is] unguarded against motivated U.S. corporate lobby interests."[58]

May and Dover imagine Canadian politics to be "addicted" to free trade, as though all that was needed was more enlightened leadership to de-link Canada from global capitalism, and many other authors emphasize the rightward turn of the Liberal Party in the early 2000s as a great political "mistake" that continues to harm the Canadian polity. Marjorie Griffin Cohen declares that the U.S. is an imperial overlord of Mexico *and* Canada, and even goes as far as to suggest that Mexico may be better equipped in some sectors to defend itself against U.S. imperialism than Canada.[59] Garry Neil's uncompelling lament for "Canadian culture" suggests that U.S. dominance of the Canadian economy has given American cultural producers the power to squeeze out their Canadian counterparts;[60] while it is certainly true that the commodification of art and culture leads to a homogenizing of the corporate popular culture that is produced, the claim that this is an American assault on Canadian culture misses the point that it is a commodified *mass* culture dominating *local* and independent culture, regardless of nationality.

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[57] Murray Dobbin, "Challenging the Forces of Deep Integration," in Ricardo Grinspun and Yasmine Shamsie, *Whose Canada? Continental Integration, Fortress North America and the Corporate Agenda*, Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007, p. 503.

[58] Elizabeth May and Sarah Dover, "Breaking the Free Trade Addiction: An Intervention on Environmental Grounds," in Ricardo Grinspun and Yasmine Shamsie, *Whose Canada? Continental Integration, Fortress North America and the Corporate Agenda*, Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007, p. 432.

[59] Marjorie Griffin Cohen, "Imperialist Regulation: US Electricity Market Designs and their Problems for Canada and Mexico," in Ricardo Grinspun and Yasmine Shamsie, *Whose Canada? Continental Integration, Fortress North America and the Corporate Agenda*, Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007, p. 439-459.

[60] Garry Neil, "Free Trade and Deep Integration in North America: Saving Canadian Culture," in Ricardo Grinspun and Yasmine Shamsie, *Whose Canada? Continental Integration, Fortress North America and the Corporate Agenda*, Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007, p. 371-389.

Other essays in the collection offer significantly weightier arguments around the problem of American domination of Canadian politics. Steven Staples' piece on deep integration, for instance, gets a number of points right, correctly highlighting the extent to which U.S. and Canadian military and security policies have been harmonized.[61] Nevertheless, Staples, too, insists on a re-assertion of Canadian sovereignty, failing to grapple with the fact that it is Canadian capital and the Canadian state that have chosen to enter into this harmonization. Grinspun and Shamsie, for their part, offer the most sober perspective in the collection, demonstrating that the integration of Canadian and U.S. politics has been carried out by and for the capitalist classes in both countries and that it is working people on both sides of the border who are increasingly hurting. However, in spite of its many strengths, their work remains committed to a position that imagines U.S. corporate power dominating Canadian politics, noting that "in this volume we pay particular attention to the loss of policy autonomy resulting from trade and investment agreements."[62]

Nevertheless, the evidence for these claims is considerably shakier than it was in the 1970s; scanning the work of John Porter in the 1960s, Wallace Clement in the 1970s, and Peter Newman in the 1980s, Jerome Klassen demonstrates that Canadian capital was increasingly concentrated following the Second World War and that process of concentration accelerated during the 1980s, a decade in which there were 7732 mergers

[61] Steven Staples, "Fortress North America: The Drive Towards Military and Security Integration and its Impact on Canadian Democratic Sovereignty," in Ricardo Grinspun and Yasmine Shamsie, *Whose Canada? Continental Integration, Fortress North America and the Corporate Agenda*, Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007, p. 154-180.

[62] Ricardo Grinspun and Yasmine Shamsie, "Canada, Free Trade, and "Deep Integration," in Ricardo Grinspun and Yasmine Shamsie, *Whose Canada? Continental Integration, Fortress North America and the Corporate Agenda*, Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007, p. 5.

and acquisitions in the Canadian economy.[63] That is, the ownership of Canadian firms became increasingly interlocked and concentrated in the hands of a small, powerful Canadian capitalist class.[64] Indeed, according to William Carroll's critical 2004 study of the Canadian corporate elite, *Corporate Power in a Globalizing World*, Canada's largest 250 firms have typically had fewer than 500 different individuals on their boards of directors, making the Canadian national bourgeoisie one of the most concentrated in any advanced capitalist economy;[65] in fact, Canadian firms have a much higher concentration of controlling shareholders than does the United States, and have a relatively small number of transnational ownership links that interrupt the intra-Canadian matrix of ownership.[66] The overlapping and interlocking networks of corporate ownership, reproduced graphically in Figures 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3, demonstrate the fact that Canada hosts what could arguably be called an oligarchy, a small network of incredibly powerful and wealthy capitalists who, by virtue of their concentration of corporate power, exert significant pressure on the Canadian state.[67] Put simply, the fact that a small number of individuals personally control most of Canada's wealth makes it very easy for those individuals to organize themselves to marshal their collective resources to influence and infiltrate the state.

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[63] Jerome Klassen, "Canada and the New Imperialism: The Economics of a Secondary Power," *Studies in Political Economy*, No. 83, 2009, p. 180-181.

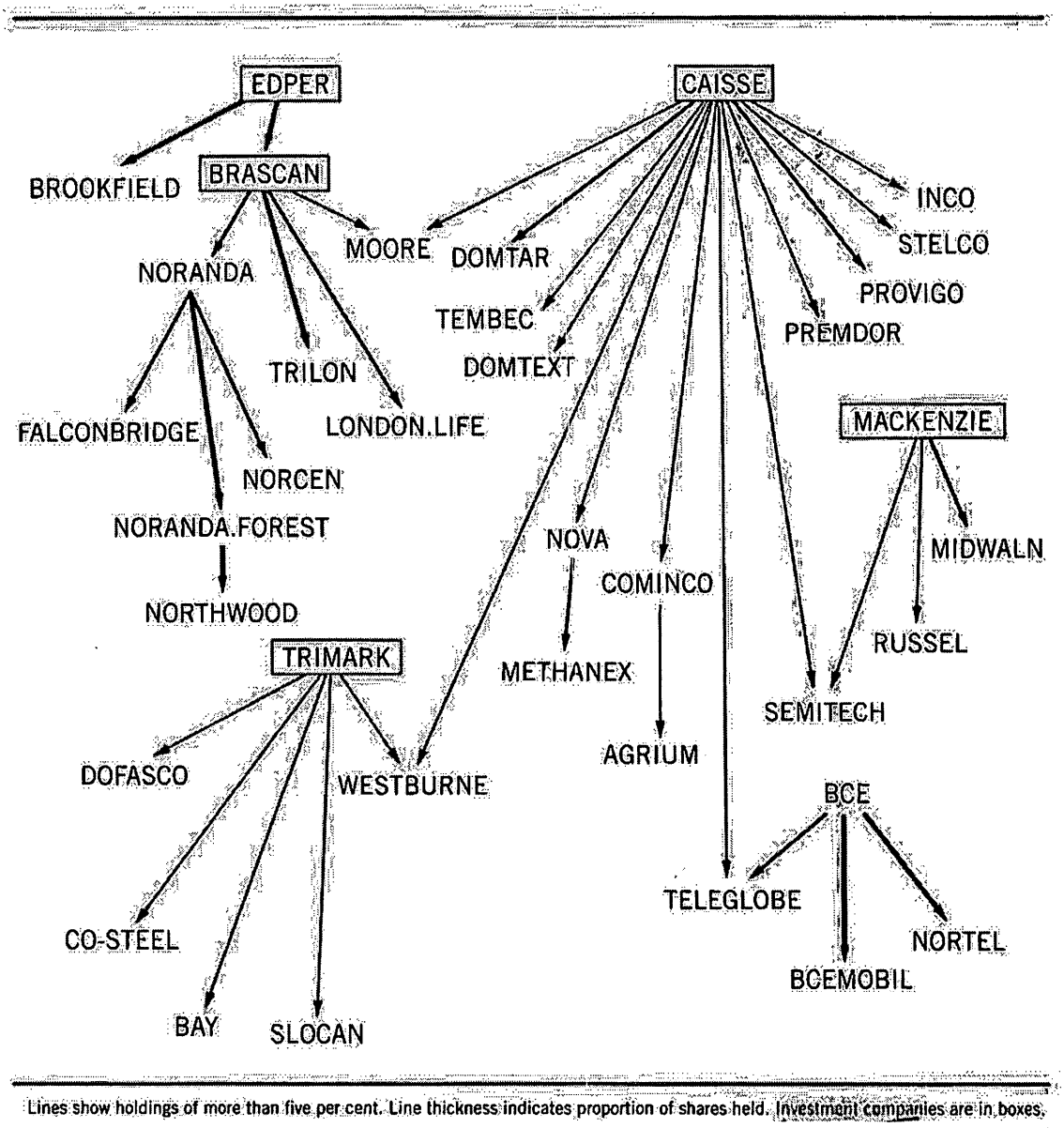
[64] Murray E.G. Smith, "Political Economy and the Canadian Working Class: Marxism or Nationalist Reformism?," *Labour/Le Travail*, No. 46, Fall, 2000, p. 343-368.

[65] William K. Carroll, *Corporate Power in a Globalizing World: A Study in Elite Social Organization*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 17

[66] B. Burgess, quoted in Carroll, *Corporate Power in a Globalizing World,* p. 44.

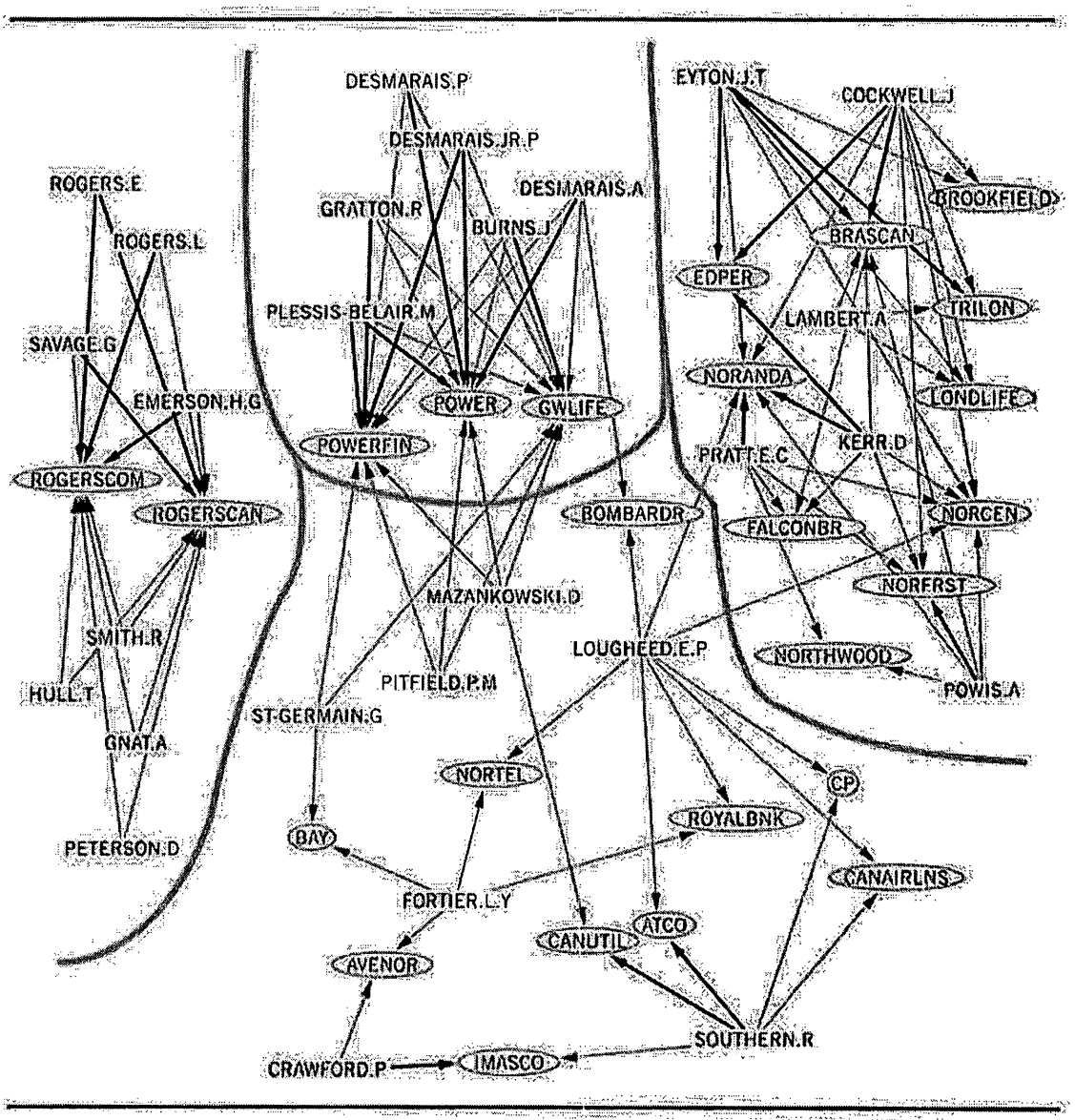
[67] I've also included, as Figure 2.4, William Carroll's breakdown of the social composition of the Canadian corporate elite, in order to highlight a point that is not explored in this dissertation: that the concentrated Canadian capitalist class is overwhelmingly composed of Anglo-Saxon men. Since this point is not raised elsewhere, it is worth simply noting that while a more gender-equitable and multi-ethnic capitalist class would not, in my opinion, lead to a less violent or imperialist politics, it is nevertheless significant that Canadian imperialism is driven by the needs of primarily white men, while its painful and exploitative consequences fall disproportionately on women and racialized people. This dynamic adds even greater weight to the argument that Canada has embarked on what must be understood as a form of imperialism.

Figure 2.1: Intercorporate Ownership Among Top Canadian Corporations, 1996.[68]



[68] William K. Carroll, *Corporate Power*, p. 57.

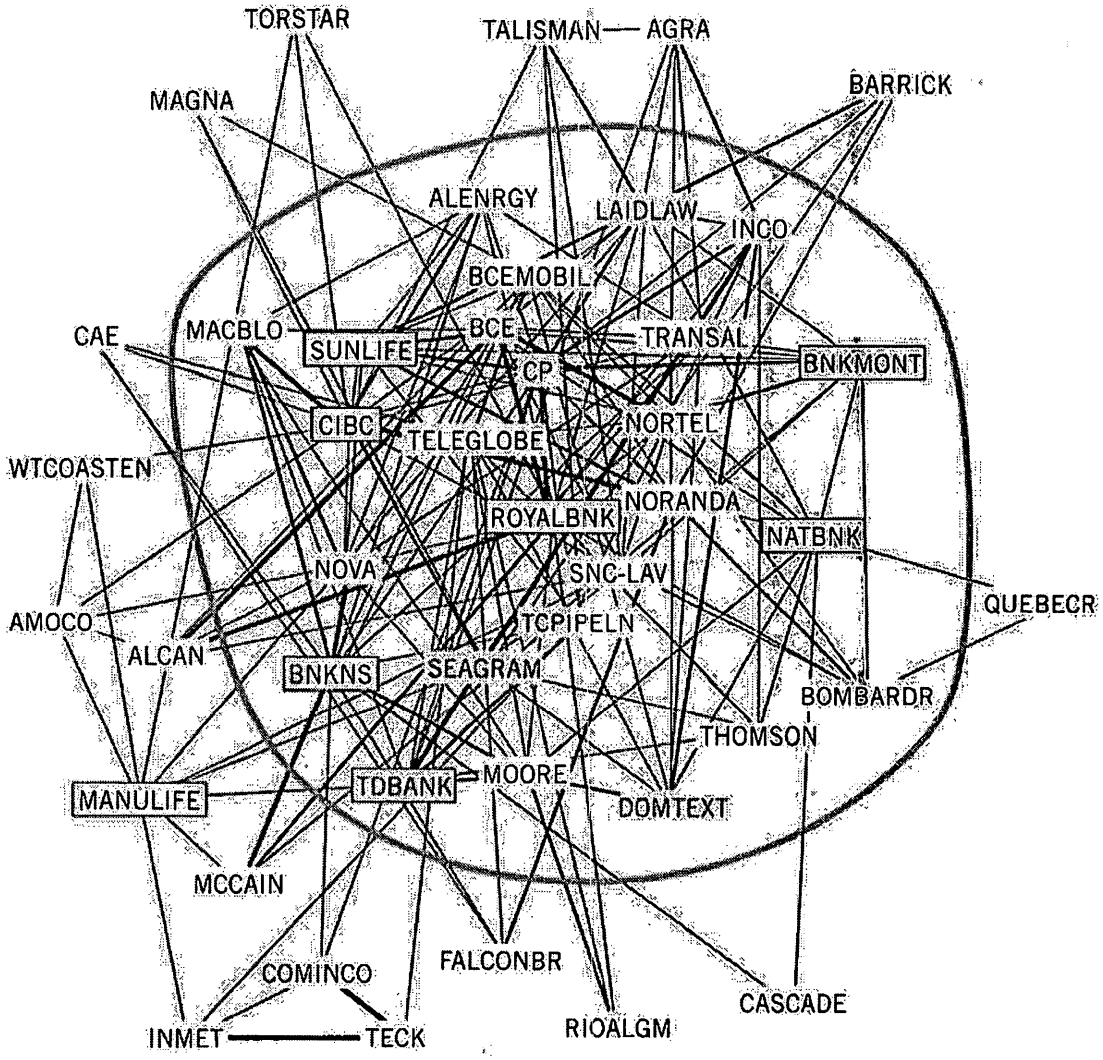
Figure 2.2: Individuals and Corporations in the Network of Thick Interpersonal Ties, 1996.[69]



Thick lines indicate that the person held an executive position in the firm. Corporations are in ovals.

[69] William K. Carroll, *Corporate Power*, p. 61.

Figure 2.3: The Network of Canadian TNCs, 1996.[70]



Primary interlocks are bolded; financial institutions are in boxes; the closed curve separates the centre from the margin.

[70] William K. Carroll, *Corporate Power*, p. 83.

Figure 2.4: A Social Profile of the Canadian Corporate Elite, 1976 and 1996.[71]

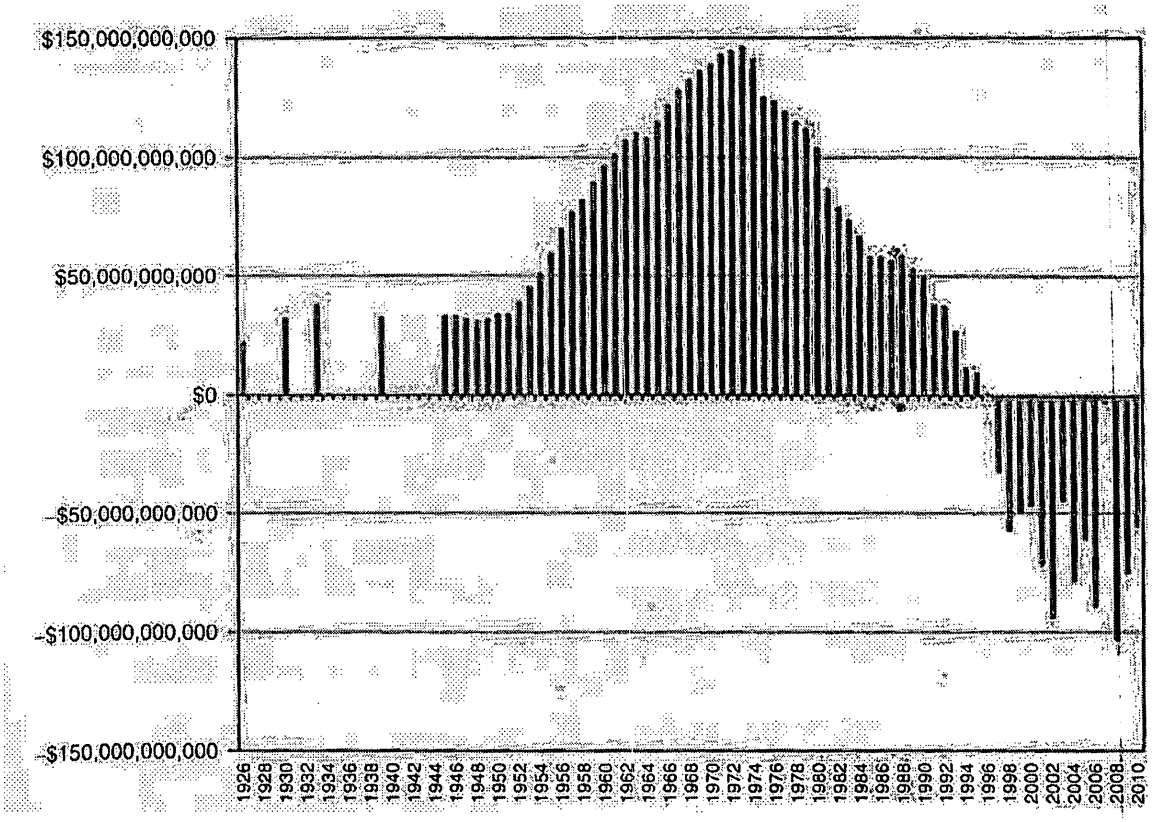
Percentage of elite who were...	**1976**	**1996**
Women	0.6	9.2
British background	77.9	63.8
French background	12.7	18.3
Other background	9.3	17.6
Members of one or more elite club(s)	89.9	54.3
Over 65 years old	21.9	30.5
Without a bachelor's degree	27.3	15.4
With MBAs or MComms	4.8	13.7
With other post-baccalaureate or professional degrees	38.5	50.7

Furthermore, with respect to the left nationalist fear of foreign ownership, Jerome Klassen demonstrates that, by 2007, Canada's GDP was the ninth largest in the world and U.S. firms only owned around 12% of Canadian assets.[72] As noted above, Canadian firms have relatively few foreign interruptions in their ownership networks, especially the largest and most profitable among them, and this dynamic has been steadily increasing since the early 1980s.[73] Indeed, Klassen re-asserts Moore and Wells' early claim that trade between Canada and the United States would be better understood as similar to trade between European powers, and that U.S.-Canadian trade has actually served to strengthen the Canadian capitalist class vis-à-vis other international competitors. By 2006, Canada was the ninth highest source of FDI flows in the world, and Canadian firms had more money invested abroad than there was foreign capital invested in Canada. While in 2006 around $500 billion in Canadian assets were owned by foreign firms,

[71] Table adapted from William K. Carroll, *Corporate Power*, p. 18.
[72] Klassen, "Canada and the New Imperialism," p. 177-179.
[73] Todd Gordon, *Imperialist Canada*, Winnipeg, Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2010, p. 17.

almost $515 billion in foreign assets were owned by Canadian firms, pointing towards the fact that as the Canadian bourgeoisie has consolidated it has looked outward in order to cash in on the spoils of neoliberal globalization.[74] According to Statistics Canada, Canada recorded more than a $100 billion surplus in net FDI in 2008, as the graph in Figure 2.5 demonstrates.

Figure 2.5. Net Foreign Direct Investment in Canada[75]



Rumours of the demise of the Canadian capitalist class, then, were highly exaggerated. To the extent that critical scholarship in international relations addressed

[74] Jerome Klassen, "Canada and the New Imperialism," p. 177.
[75] Paul Kellogg, "From the Avro Arrow to Afghanistan: The Political Economy of Canadian Militarism," in Jerome Klassen and Greg Albo, ed., *Empire's Ally: Canada and the War in Afghanistan*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2013, p. 205.

questions of political economy, it noticed the increasing convergence of Canadian foreign policy and the needs of it's business elite: Fred Judson noted in 2003 that one member of the Chrétien government had claimed as early as the mid-1990s that "foreign policy 'is' trade policy."[76] Indeed, as Carroll and Klassen concluded in 2010:

> Kari Levitt was, as subsequent research showed, entirely wrong in her prediction that the Canadian capitalist class would become a powerless elite of branch plant managers and coupon clippers. She was equally wrong in projecting into the future the late-1960s hegemony of American capital, as in her prediction that by the year 2000 U.S.-based corporations would control 75% of capitalist world output.[77]

In fact, in 2008, Canada recorded its first ever surplus in bilateral FDI with the United States, investing some $17 billion more in the U.S. than it did in Canada.[78] Indeed, as Todd Gordon notes, the Canadian capitalist class itself is rather proud of its accomplishments and would hardly take seriously the idea that it had been "hollowed out." A University of Toronto-based corporate think-tank claimed that, in 2006, seventy-two Canadian firms were among the "global leaders," up from thirty-three in 1985, cutting across a wide variety of sectors beyond simply resource extraction.[79]

Even if U.S. ownership of Canadian assets was greater, it is not self-evident that Canada could be called a "dependency;" as Paul Kellogg argued in 2005, foreign

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[76] Roy MacLaren, quoted in Fred Judson, "For an Eclectic and Critical Political Economy Perspective on Canadian Foreign Economic Policy," *Studies in Political Economy*, Vol. 71/72, Autumn 2003/Winter 2004, p. 109. In addition to Judson, a handful of other critical international relations scholars pointed to the convergence of political and economic questions in Canadian foreign policy in the 90s and 2000s, often through the lens of gender analysis and post-positivist critical security studies, including: Mark Neufeld, "Democratization in/of Canadian Foreign Policy: Critical Reflections," *Studies in Political Economy,* Vol. 58 (Spring 1999), pp. 97-119. Sandra Whitworth, "Women and Gender in the Foreign Policy Review Process," in M. Cameron and M. Appel Molot, (ed.), *Canada Among Nations 1995: Democracy and Foreign Policy*, Ottawa, Carleton University Press, 1995. Deborah Stienstra, "Can the Silence be Broken? Gender and Canadian Foreign Policy," *International Journal* 50 (Winter 1994-95), pp. 103-127.

[77] William K. Carroll and Jerome Klassen, "Hollowing out Corporate Canada? Changes in the Corporate Network since the 1990s," *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 35 (1), 2010, p. 26.

[78] Todd Gordon, *Imperialist Canada*, p. 22.

[79] The criteria for the list included, among other things, revenues of over $100 million and being among the top 5 most profitable firms in its market sector. Todd Gordon, *Imperialist Canada,* p. 20.

ownership of Canadian industry does not have the same effect as it does in the low wage economies of the Global South. Rather, U.S. investment in Canada is better understood as being about a broader continental integration and cooperation than domination. In fact, it is an integration that Canada has actively sought out, often from a position of some strength, in order to better advance its own interests. Indeed, the deep integration that Canada has sought with the United States has been a conscious and active strategy of Canadian foreign policy since the Second World War, a point carefully and thoughtfully articulated by Henry Heller in a review article in *Historical Materialism*,[80] and it is here that I intend to turn my attention to applying this political economic approach to the realm of foreign policy.

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF CANADIAN FOREIGN POLICY

Canadian foreign policy is typically assessed through the two leading traditions in mainstream Canadian political science and international relations, realism and liberalism, with the latter supplemented by a social democratic tradition that draws from the left nationalist politics described above. This section will briefly address and critique those three approaches before applying a critical political economy framework to the history of Canadian foreign policy, with the aim of building a more convincing explanation for the dramatic changes that have been manifest in Canadian policy over the past decade.[81]

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[80] Henry Heller, "Review of Todd Gordon, Imperialist Canada," *Historical Materialism* 20.2, 2012, p. 228-230.

[81] Among the best examples of mainstream approaches to Canadian foreign policy, not including those I will take up in the text, are: David Dewitt and John Kirton, *Canada as a Principal Power,* Toronto, Wiley, 1983. Maxwell Cameron, "Round Table on Canadian Foreign Policy," *Canadian Foreign Policy* 6 (3) 1999, p. 1-24. Tom Keating, "Introduction: The Sources of Multilateralism in Canadian Foreign Policy," *Canada and World Order*, 2nd ed., Toronto, OUP, 2002, p. 1-17. Lloyd Axworthy, *Navigating a New World: Canada's Global Future*, Toronto, Knopf, 2003. Jennifer Welsh, *At Home in the World: Canada's Global Vision for the 21st Century*, Toronto, Harper Collins, 2004. John Kirton, *Canadian Foreign Policy in a Changing World*, Toronto, Thomson Nelson, 2007. Of course, there's no better source for mainstream

Notwithstanding the different analytical and normative approaches, the thread that connects most mainstream and academic understandings of Canadian foreign policy is the assumption that Canada has been primarily engaged in the world as a well-intentioned force for "good" and that what we need to assess is whether its methods have been effective. That is, they present no doubt that Canada means well; the only question is whether, and when, its efforts have been successful.

This is easily observed in any high school or undergraduate-level textbook on Canadian history, Canadian politics, or Canadian foreign policy. Take *Democracy, Diversity and Good Government*, an introductory text co-authored by three Canadian academics in 2011, which arguably represents a relatively progressive version of mainstream discourse on Canadian politics. While the chapter on foreign policy offers a few tentative critiques of Canada's retreat from peacekeeping and notes the decline in Canadian development assistance programs,[82] it nevertheless ascribes to Canada a long-term – almost innate – desire to do good and, furthermore, assumes that the rest of the world agrees with that assessment.

> Throughout much of the world, Canada enjoys a reputation as a country that promotes international harmony, peace, and global order... Canada as a "middle power" tries to constrain the great powers by encouraging (particularly in cooperation with other middle powers) the development of international law and multilateral organizations such as the United Nations. Through such organizations, the great powers can be encouraged to respect rules and laws that less powerful countries like Canada have a hand in shaping. Canada, particularly during the time [Lester] Pearson served as External Affairs minister, became

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analysis of Canadian foreign policy than actual foreign policy statements and newspaper and magazine reporting on them, from which this dissertation will draw extensively.

[82] Of course, both of these activities would, themselves, be critiqued by left and postcolonial scholarship for being liberal manifestations of colonial politics that assumes Canada should "help" other countries "develop" even while Canada participates in the construction of conditions that create the need for such assistance.

> known as the "helpful fixer" of international problems through the use of quiet diplomacy.[83]

Indeed, while the text mentions that peacekeeping has been marginalized in Canadian policy for nearly twenty years, it nevertheless introduces the chapter with a special feature on Lester Pearson, his 1957 Nobel Peace Prize, and Canada's peacekeeping legacy. The assumption that Canada means well in the world is woven into every debate that the authors present, and their conclusion is particularly telling:

> Canada's experiences in meeting the challenges of democracy, diversity, and good government provide an opportunity for the country to take its place in the world as a model for other countries striving to satisfy similar goals and aspirations.[84]

Indeed, as with Michael Ignatieff's remarks cited in the previous chapter, the voices that set the tone for mainstream understandings of Canadian foreign policy assume that Canada has successfully solved the problems of democracy and good governance and should now turn to the task of "teaching" everyone else how to do it. This logic will be manifest in much of the discourse about Canada and Honduras, and I will address the problems and contradictions in this perspective throughout this dissertation.

Of course, within mainstream discourse on Canadian policy, there are competing visions. Greg Albo and Paul Kellogg each offer very useful overviews of the traditional readings of Canadian foreign policy in their respective chapters in *Empire's Ally*, the very important 2013 assessment of Canada's occupation of Afghanistan. According to Kellogg:

> For liberalism, war and militarism are ethical issues, mistaken economically, dangerous politically – mistakes and dangers that can be 'read out' of the international system through appropriate

[83] Eric Mintz, Livianna Tossutti, and Christopher Dunn, *Democracy, Diversity, and Good Government: An Introduction to Politics in Canada*, Toronto, Pearson, 2011, p. 496.
[84] Mintz, Tossutti, and Dunn, *Democracy, Diversity and Good Government*, p. 520-521.

> policies and institutions. Their pessimistic friends in the realist tradition disagree. For realism, states are the key unit of the international system. States operate, in an anarchic international environment, to maximize their own power and position. The ultimate instrument of state policy in this competitive environment is the military. Realistic policy is about preparing for war, not eliminating it.[85]

These two intellectual positions are manifest in Canada also as a division between the Conservative and Liberal parties, who more or less accept the understanding of their respective intellectual traditions and apply them to policy-making, with the New Democratic Party walking a line between the liberal vision and the left nationalists. As such, Conservatives in Canada will tend towards a more militaristic posture and seek integration with the U.S. only insofar as it seems to offer better prospects for the security and defence of Canadian assets. Liberals, by contrast, place more emphasis on accomplishing the goals of Canadian capital by employing a spectrum of institutions – from aid agencies to diplomatic missions to international organizations – in order to support Canadian capital without resorting to military force unless absolutely necessary.

The NDP are even less willing to support military adventurism, fearful of the marginalization of Canadian goals to the needs of the United States, with a reading of Canadian interests that includes, at least minimally, working people as well as capital. It is, of course, a deeply contradictory position that the NDP finds itself attempting to carve out; on the one hand, it acknowledges that increased military spending cuts into state support for working people and community organizations and public services. Nevertheless, it simultaneously accepts, to a certain extent, the logic that Canadian wars abroad are necessary, either for "national security" or to promote "freedom and free trade," which would bring benefits to Canadian capital and will trickle down to Canadian

[85] Paul Kellogg, *Empire's Ally*, p. 182.

workers.[86] In addition to being logically incoherent, this position necessarily prioritizes the needs of Canadian workers above working people from other countries, insofar as the NDP is willing to support a collusion of the Canadian military and exploitative corporations abroad in the hopes that a stronger Canadian economy will bring advantages to Canadian workers.[87] For obvious reasons, this has alienated the NDP (and a variety of closely affiliated social democratic organizations, including the majority of the organized labour movement) from those left organizations that seek trustworthy allies in principled opposition to Canadian imperialism.[88]

Progressive political economy, then, is uniquely positioned to respond to the rather muddled debates between realists, liberals and social democrats by offering a coherent analysis – and a principled normative critique – of the shifts in Canadian foreign policy. That analysis usually sees the period from Confederation to the Second World War as being largely about carving out space for an independent Canadian foreign policy – independent from Great Britain, that is – and achieving that goal more or less by the

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[86] The NDP has been moving in this direction since at least the ascendance of Jack Layton as party leader, and the rightward drift has only increased since he passed away in 2011. This is well documented by Murray Cooke, who reflected on the 2013 NDP Convention: "like the federal Liberal Party leadership race, the NDP policy convention this past weekend proved to be rather anti-climactic. Any expectations (or hopes) for a divisive, soul-searching, battle royale over the identity of the NDP fell flat. With minimal debate and a decisive vote of 960 to 188, delegates approved a new preamble to the party's constitution based in part on Jack Layton's final message to Canadians and removed forward looking references to "democratic socialism" and "social ownership." Instead, the new preamble lists the "social democratic and democratic socialist traditions" as part of the party's heritage and calls for "a rules based economy." Murray Cooke, "The NDP Convention: The Decline and Fall of an Old Preamble (Or A Social Democratic Party Becalmed)," *The Bullet*, No. 807, April 18, 2013. Indeed, as the Liberal Party reorganizes itself under the younger, hipper leadership of Justin Trudeau, the current trajectory suggests that the Liberals and NDP will continue to split the anti-Conservative vote, which could prompt calls for a merger between them to defeat Stephen Harper.

[87] This is a position that Kim Scipes, referring to the AFL-CIO in the United States, calls "labour imperialism." Kim Scipes, *AFL-CIO's Secret War against Developing Country Workers: Solidarity or Sabotage?*, Toronto, Lexington Books, 2010.

[88] Indeed, the NDP in 2013 dropped any references to "socialism" in its party program, even as frustrated working people in Canada were demonstrating more and more appetite for discussion of non-capitalist alternatives. Rick Salutin, "NDP ditches socialist 'albatross' just when it might be an asset," *Toronto Star*, April 19, 2013.

end of the war, after the Canadian state demonstrated its willingness and ability to send its own working class people to their deaths in Europe. At the outbreak of WWI, then Prime Minister Robert Borden used the war to try to increase his say in British politics; the Dominion of Canada sent some 500,000 soldiers to war – about 1 of every 16 Canadians – and over 60,000 of them never returned.[89] Most were conscripted – sacrificed by the Canadian state against their will – to fight for Great Britain, after Borden and the Leader of the Opposition Wilfred Laurier enthusiastically declared, "our answer [to the outbreak of war] goes at once, and it goes in the classical language of the British answer to the call of duty: Ready, Aye, Ready!"[90] Indeed, Canada was even willing to intervene in the Russian Revolution to assert its role in international politics, though it is worth noting that the interests of private capital were present in Canadian statecraft even then; Canada invaded Russia in 1917 at Archangel and Murmansk and, in 1919, an army of nearly 5000 Canadians landed in Siberia to try to destroy the new workers' state.[91] Joining the mission was Canadian Trade and Commerce official Dana Wilgress, who, as two Canadian historians put it, "had great hopes for a huge Russian market after the Revolution was defeated."[92] The defeat of Russia's revolution did not work out, but nevertheless, at the end of two great wars, Britain was exhausted, Canada had asserted its independence, and the U.S. was unquestionably at the head of the capitalist world. Subsequently, Canada's foreign policy would seek to cultivate the "Middle Power" image, actively protecting its independence by working to establish an international architecture that would allow for Canadian capitalist development.

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[89] Mintz, Tossutti, and Dunn, *Democracy, Diversity and Good Government*, p. 507.
[90] Wilfred Laurier, quoted in Norman Hillmer and J.L. Granatstein, *Empire to Umpire*, Toronto, Irwin Publishing, 1994, p. 53.
[91] Yves Engler, *The Black Book of Canadian Foreign Policy*, Black Point, Fernwood, 2009, p. 258-259.
[92] Hillmer and Granatstein, *Empire to Umpire*, p. 70.

As such, the immediate post-war moment in Canadian foreign policy was characterized most dramatically by the push for the creation of NATO. Indeed, far from being roped into an American project, Canada was a driving force behind the creation of the organization. The hope was that NATO would serve to strengthen Canada's independence by creating an infrastructure that would protect Canada from being folded into the United States. Paul Kellogg, drawing from important empirical work by Jon Mclin and Tom Axworthy that examined Canadian-U.S. diplomatic relations in the late 1940s, demonstrates conclusively that it was Canada, not the U.S., which pushed hardest for the creation of NATO. Lester Pearson, then Minister of External Affairs, was clear about the advantages NATO held for Canada, arguing that a defence treaty including the North American and European powers:

> would help to ensure that Canada was not pushed out ahead of the United States in the event of war. In the last two wars Canada has gone to war more than two years before the United States. A treaty commitment by the United States instead of a congressional resolution would lessen the danger that this might happen again.[93]

Indeed, a 1948 visit to Ottawa by the U.S. Secretary of Defence elicited his surprise at the "curious fact" that Canada was pushing fervently the idea for a North Atlantic alliance.[94] That Canada should have been the driving force behind the agreement suggests not dependence but, rather, an active strategy for protecting its independence.

Indeed, NATO served to facilitate the shift in Canadian foreign policy to what Kellogg calls "military parasitism," which characterized most of the post-war era. With defence alliances firmly in place with the United States, Canada could rely on the U.S. Cold War machine to protect western access to markets in its "sphere of influence"

[93] Lester Pearson, cited in Paul Kellogg, *Empire's Ally*, p. 189.
[94] Paul Kellogg, *Empire's Ally*, p. 189.

without maintaining the high military budgets that characterized the U.S. and Soviet Union during that period. Indeed, while Canada still maintained a high military budget in the early 1950s, and was an active participant in the Korean War, the following two decades saw a significant turn away from military spending; in 1951 the military represented some 40% of Canadian state expenditure, but by 1971 it was down to around 10%.[95] Indeed, the story of the scuttling of Canada's "Avro Arrow" project – and the concurrent dismantling of Canada's defence industry in the 1950s – is often characterized in Canadian popular culture as a defeat; the story is told as inept Canadian politicians colluding with foreign (especially U.S.) military industrialists to bring down a project that provided jobs for Canadians and guaranteed military independence. However, this episode would be better understood as a strategic decision to re-orient Canadian industry away from military aerospace in a moment when there was no real foreign market for its products; the only buyer for the Arrow would have been the Canadian military, and with U.S. protection guaranteed, Canadian capital stood to gain much more by developing alternative industries and keeping a low military budget in order to sustain a welfare state that would feed Canadian growth during the heyday of the Keynesian "golden age."

Arguments that Canadian foreign and military policy was dominated by the United States sometimes point to the Defence Production Sharing Agreement (DPSA), signed in 1959, as an example of this; on the surface, the agreement locked Canada into full integration between the two countries, in terms of military production, and meant that the direction of Canadian production was dictated by the needs of the U.S. military.[96] Nevertheless, in accord with the analysis above, while the left nationalist tradition has

[95] Paul Kellogg, *Empire's Ally*, p. 192.
[96] Danford W. Middlemiss and Joel J. Sokolsky, *Canadian Defence: Decisions and Determinants*, Toronto, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1989.

consistently read this as a key moment in the dismantling of Canadian industrial development, the DPSA was – again – pursued by the Canadian state and served to actually reverse Canada's trade deficit with the United States in military hardware. That is, by locking the United States into the DPSA, Canada guaranteed that the small-scale military production it did encourage *could* be sold to the U.S. military (for its various Cold War conflicts, most notably in Vietnam) while Canada spent relatively little on its own military and so, between 1959-1965, Canada recorded a trade surplus of $177.2 million in military products vis-à-vis the United States.[97] It is rather more convincing, then, to see the DPSA as a piece of Canada's active strategy of "military parasitism," whereby the U.S. would do the work of policing the globe on behalf of global capital, even as that capital consolidated within emerging and re-emerging capitalist powers like Germany, Japan and, on a smaller scale, Canada.[98]

Indeed, even while Canada kept out of the Cold War spotlight, it was nevertheless an active benefactor of the U.S. wars of empire. Latin America offers a particularly revealing window here; on the one hand, Canada was relatively uninvolved in the near-constant U.S. aggression in Latin America during the Cold War. Nevertheless, Canadian capital often benefited from it, especially beginning in the 1970s. Ricardo Grinspun and Yasmine Shamsie describe Canadian Latin America policy at the time:

> Since the late 1970s, Canadian foreign policy has followed a liberal economic philosophy that emphasizes economic competitiveness, the enhancement of trading opportunities, and fiscal responsibility. These goals are in full harmony with the outward-oriented, market-driven strategy that Ottawa has pursued in the region. Its support for [structural adjustment policies] has been evident in its active participation in the region's key multilateral organizations, through its bilateral

[97] Paul Kellogg, *Empire's Ally*, p. 189.
[98] Paul Kellogg, *Empire's Ally*, p. 181-209.

> relations with individual countries, and through its vigorous support of Canadian corporations active in the region. In fact, by 1989, Canada's International Development Agency (CIDA) had unreservedly adopted this policy set and "came to regard support for structural adjustment as a first priority."[99]

Canada stubbornly continued to promote these policies throughout the disastrous decades of the 1980s and 90s and, indeed, Canadian companies reaped the benefits where they could, as I will detail in the Honduran case. But with the United States doing all of the "dirty work" of empire, Canada was able to, more or less, slip under the radar while it grew its capital in the blood-soaked earth of the Americas.[100]

What is more, the rewards of a "military parasitism" were also manifest in the realm of international diplomacy, where Canada was able to cultivate its image as a force for peace and multilateral dialogue in global affairs, an image that still retains its ideological power. As Canada more or less withdrew from direct participation in America's secret and not-so-secret wars, it avoided the political "taint" that came with them; Washington's aggression in Iran, Guatemala, Chile, Vietnam, Cuba, Nicaragua, Afghanistan and so many other places made it an obvious target for global anti-imperial discontent and further limited its capacity to achieve its goals without the use or threat of force. Canada, by contrast, was perceived as having no colonial history and no active

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[99] Ricardo Grinspun and Yasmine Shamsie, "Missed Opportunity: Canada's Re-engagement with Latin America and the Caribbean," in *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 69, 2010, p. 175.

[100] This language reflects the descriptions that come from Latin American scholars themselves, and those North Americans whose work has attempted to grapple with the violence of Latin America's experience of the 20th century. Please see Eduardo Galeano, *The Open Veins of Latin America*, New York, Monthly Review Press, 1997. Greg Grandin, *The Blood of Guatemala: A History of Race and Nation*, London, Duke University Press, 2000. James Petras and Henry Veltmeyer, *Globalization Unmasked: Imperialism in the 21st Century*, Halifax, Fernwood, 2001. For more details on the central U.S. role in Latin America's wars, see also Chalmers Johnson, *The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy and the End of the Republic*, New York, Henry Holt & Co., 2004. William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, New York, W.W. Norton & Co., 1972.

role in Cold War aggression,[101] and it earned political and diplomatic capital, especially among the emerging postcolonial states, that gave it a stronger voice at international forums and made it a more important ally for the United States. This period, arguably ushered in during Canada's mediation of the Suez Crisis in 1956, represented the fruition of Canada's "military parasitism," and created what is perhaps best described as the "peacekeeping moment" in Canadian foreign policy. Notably, this course was plotted in contradiction to the wishes of the United States; as Kellogg argues:

> Interestingly, the Canadian government made these decisions despite considerable pressure from its principle ally, the United States, to go the other direction – to become a warfare, not a welfare, state. But successive Canadian governments successfully resisted this pressure... thus the 'leaders of a secondary state,' Canada, accommodated themselves to the military preoccupations of the hegemon. But they did so in such a way as to advance Canada's economic interest at the expense of the hegemon.[102]

It is perhaps instructive to note that, while the left nationalist tradition insists on imagining Canada as "dependent" since it is not the primary imperialist power, IR scholars outside of the political economy tradition have, at times, actually hit upon the fact that secondary states routinely accommodate hegemonic powers not simply because they are coerced but in order to gain some advantage of their own. In the case of

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[101] Of course, the claim that Canada had no colonial history is absurdly and rather offensively inaccurate; thousands of Indigenous nations were colonized and sometimes exterminated in the processes that created Canada as a modern nation-state. In fact, the claim that Canada has no colonial history it itself a manifestation of Canadian colonialism, insofar as it erases from history the very nations it colonized. Nevertheless, the claim is still ubiquitous in Canadian popular and political culture, and was famously reproduced by Prime Minister Harper at the G20 summit in Pittsburgh in 2009. David Ljunngrun, "Every G20 Nation Wants to be Canada, insists PM," *Reuters*, September 25, 2009. This claim is repeated by the Canadian ruling classes at every opportunity, as if by repeating the statement it can somehow become true. In a 2010 issue of the *Canadian Military Journal*, for instance, the highest ranking officer in the Canadian Armed Forces tries to convince his readers that "with no history as a colonizer, [Canada is] a credible and trusted partner for the countries of the region." Walter Natyncyk and Nancy MacKinnon, "Canada and the Americas: Defending Our Backyard," *Canadian Military Journal*, Vol 10, No 3, Summer 2010, p. 9. On Canada's profoundly and fundamentally colonial history, please see Howard Adams, *Prison of Grass: Canada From a Native Point of View*, Saskatoon, Fifth House Publishing, 1989.

[102] Paul Kellogg, *Empire's Ally*, p. 198.

neorealists like Robert Keohane and John Kirton, the argument is obviously rooted in the incomplete realist framework of zero-sum power games between states, but it is noteworthy that they at least grapple with the presence of secondary, but not dependent, powers.[103] This idea is articulated with more clarity, and with more attention to the central role of capital in determining power relations between states, in David Harvey's seminal work in *The New Imperialism*, which insisted that the contemporary U.S. empire relied on a mixture of consent and coercion of its allies.[104] There are further gestures towards this argument in the neo-Gramscian school of critical IR;[105] for the purposes of this chapter, what is important is the idea that Canada – while influenced by the United States – was not dominated by it. To the contrary, Canada adopted strategies that allowed it to take advantage of its relationship with the United States to further its own aims, most notably the development and consolidation of Canadian capital, a project which was so successful, in fact, that it ultimately dictated the shift in Canadian foreign policy underway today.

STATE AND CAPITAL

It is here, in the shift from the "peacekeeping moment" to the new Canadian imperialism, that a political economic analysis of Canada's foreign policy becomes most crucial. I will explore this shift – the move to a more aggressive, militaristic and

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[103] The American IR scholar Robert Keohane is a pioneer of the neorealist camp, but there is, indeed, a growing stream of neorealists in Canadian foreign policy scholarship, who effectively locate Canada as a secondary power that participates in its alliances with larger powers like the U.S. in order to maintain its own power vis-à-vis the rest of the world. Indeed, there is a kernel of truth to this reading, though it remains theoretically uncomplicated and incomplete for its lack of any understand of *how* power is accrued in international politics and what dynamics drive the establishment and shifts of those power relations. John Kirton, *Canadian Foreign Policy in a Changing World*, Toronto, Thomson Nelson, 2007. See also Robert Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1984.

[104] David Harvey, *The New Imperialism*, p. 183-213.

[105] Stephen Gill, *American Hegemony and the Trilateral Commission*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991.

imperialist Canadian foreign policy – in greater detail in this section. I insist on a critical political economy approach, which is crucial both in explaining what might otherwise appear as an irrational change or one driven by particular personalities, and in laying the groundwork for the ways we would seek to confront that change. Indeed, mainstream realist and liberal analyses tend to explain this transition in terms of the new threats to "global security" posed by "international terrorism" since 9/11, and debate with one another over what ought to be the appropriate response. Realists typically endorse increased military and defence spending and deployment to root out potential "terrorist threats," while liberals respond with a more balanced policy framework that mixes military force with more effective international mechanisms for conflict resolution and poverty relief in order to forestall the emergence of "terrorist threats" in the first place.[106] Nevertheless, both of these responses rest upon an analysis that sees Canadian foreign policy as being shaped primarily by the competing ideals of individual realists and liberals. Shifts in Canadian policy, then, are understood simply as reflecting shifts in electoral trends, and the primary political agents of Canadian policy are considered to be the ruling parties themselves.

Leading examples of these mainstream understandings of the genesis of Canadian policy are anything but inspiring, often ranging somewhere between the realm of academic inquiry and pure ideology. Storied Canadian historians Jack Granatstein and Norman Hillmer's 1994 *Empire to Umpire* is a dated, but emblematic, account of the

[106] This is a debate that, arguably, misses the point somewhat; as Colleen Bell argues convincingly, these traditions fundamentally share a similar view on how national and international politics should function and differ only to the extent that they imagine different ways of protecting and policing the current order. Bell's work adds a key piece, focusing primarily on the post-9/11 security regime in Canada, and demonstrating the extent to which the entire apparatus of liberal democracy is being redefined in order to facilitate the colonial violence necessary – within and beyond Canadian borders – to maintain the capitalist world order. Colleen Bell, *The Freedom of Security: Governing Canada in the Age of Counter-Terrorism*, University of British Columbia Press, Vancouver, 2011.

history of Canadian foreign policy and relations with the United States, that consistently fails to assess policy at a level that goes deeper than the competing quirks and personalities of top level politicians. Instead, it relies on sweeping generalizations about "Canadian attitudes," as though the state could be imagined as one person, struggling to make up his/her mind about how to act in the world. Ultimately, it reifies a variety of theoretically dubious claims about Canada, Canadians, morality, and "common sense:"

> Few Canadians would want their governments to sacrifice national advantage for the sake of international morality, but it serves a purpose to fret about the implications of every one of our actions abroad. For Canadians, it is also apparently essential. Jaded Canadians also forget that, troubled as their country might be by division and economic problems, it is one of the world's few success stories. Domestic prosperity aside, Canada has a reputation for trying to solve global problems, for contributing to world betterment, and for attempting to improve the lot of people in the Third World. We are not the world arbiter we sometimes pretend to be, unfortunately, but if the superpowers and mad-dog nation states had exercised anything like the good sense that Canadians have shown in the last century then possibly, just possibly, the world might be a better place.[107]

This type of analysis sets the tone for much of mainstream debates around Canadian foreign policy, as in the 2011 textbook described above; should Canada maximize its self-interest or try to "do good" in the world? It is a false – and rather absurd – dichotomy, filled with unsubstantiated and ill-defined terms and concepts. It offers no sense of the distinctions within Canadian society – the hierarchies of class, race and gender that determine whose interests are defined as "Canadian" – nor does it offer any framework for what constitutes "good" behaviour in the world. The latter point is important. Since Hillmer and Granatstein praise Canada's "domestic prosperity," we must assume that they consider the profoundly unequal development engendered by

[107] Hillmer and Granatstein, *Empire to Umpire*, p. 350-351.

industrial capitalism to be a "good" thing. It would seem to follow that imposing that system on the rest of the world would be an example of "good" behaviour. The "international morality" and "good sense" described above surely does not have universal applicability; indeed, Canadian colonization of hundreds of Indigenous nations involved the violent assertion of "Canadian" moral codes over those of their victims, and the assumption that "Canadian values" should be universal is, itself, a rather troubling manifestation of a colonial attitude.[108]

The type of work produced by Hillmer and Granatstein is, in fact, a cornerstone for most popular writing on Canadian foreign policy. A cursory scan of popular history and Canadian media reveals the same inattention to detail and deep understandings of superficial phenomena. Andrew Cohen's 2003 *While Canada Slept* is one example, among many, of popular analysis of Canadian foreign policy that is analytically and theoretically shallow, and unrigorous in its research.[109] Though a finalist for a Governor General's Literary Award, Cohen's book fails to develop an analysis that goes deeper than the average political campaign speech. Indeed, it offers a vacuous platform based on a patchwork of mythologies and misreadings (Canada trades with the United States because they speak English and observe the rule of law and democracy) and treats "Canada" as though it were a wayward child, navigating its relationship with its "best friend" the United States and "maturing" into a greater "self-confidence:"

> Modesty is no virtue for a country in search of influence, and excellence is no vice. We have to try harder and speak louder, even if it is only to ourselves about ourselves... at the end of the day, we can have the world's best small army, its most efficient, generous aid program, and its most imaginative foreign service.

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[108] Howard Adams, *Prison of Grass.*

[109] His work has, incidentally, no citations whatsoever. Andrew Cohen, *While Canada Slept: How We Lost Our Place In The World*, Toronto, McLelland and Stewart, 2003.

> We can reject mediocrity... what we do abroad will enrich us at home.[110]

On the last point, of course, Cohen stumbles into a rather profound truth: Canadian capital *has* made riches abroad. But his analysis neither explains how or why that is the case and, as such, is profoundly ill-equipped to assess it normatively. Indeed, despite much rhetoric about Canada's historical commitment to promoting peace, liberty and prosperity in the world, Cohen has absolutely no explanation for why the Canadian state would choose to promote these things, beyond some essential Canadian "character" embedded within its politicians. Cohen's emphasis on Canadian "character" is, unfortunately, not uncommon, even in some supposedly political economy approaches. Stephen Clarkson and Maria Banda, in *Whose Canada?*, describe Canadian diplomatic efforts in the aftermath of 9/11 as "reverting to its instinctive helpful fixer role."[111]

Progressive political economy demands a more complicated understanding of the genesis of state policy, rooted in the concrete ways that the modern state reproduces itself. Jerome Klassen articulates this brilliantly:

> From a theoretical perspective, Canadian foreign policy must be linked to the patterns of accumulation through which the state is reproduced as an institutional configuration of capitalist class power. In this conceptualization, the state is structurally connected to the relations of exploitation that constitute the capitalist mode of production. The state guarantees private property, issues the money form, regulates class relations, mediates all cross-border transactions and taxes various points of exchange. With this in mind, the 'autonomy' of the state is

[110] Andrew Cohen, *While Canada Slept,* p. 203.

[111] Stephen Clarkson and Maria Banda, "Paradigm Shift or Paradigm Twist? The Impact of the Bush Doctrine on Canada's International Position," in Ricardo Grinspun and Yasmine Shamsie, *Whose Canada? Continental Integration, Fortress North America and the Corporate Agenda*, Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007, p. 118.

> rooted in the particular institutionalization of capitalist social relations.[112]

Klassen, drawing from Ellen Wood and Nicos Poulantzes, goes on to note that the arrangement works when the state allows the privatization of the production process but takes on the role of regulating the macroeconomy; a bifurcation of class power that relies upon the material wealth created by the capitalist production process. Capital and the state, then, are interdependent, and exercise only "relative autonomy" from one another. Klassen continues:

> In this context public policies and the governments that devise them are inextricably connected to the accumulation process and its class relationships. The state is institutionally separate from the concrete processes of value production and exchange, yet simultaneously operates as the guarantor and ultimate manager of these processes. The task of a critical social science, then, is to highlight the ways in which government agents and policies express the economic and political interests of social classes within domestic "power blocs."[113]

Drawing from the long theoretical tradition of historical materialism, this mode of analysis insists that the material world is not shaped simply by the ideas of people, who devise and enact policies, but, rather, ideas themselves are shaped by the social-material conditions in which their dreamers are embedded. That is, the social-material context in which the state is embedded is a crucial factor in determining the types of ideas that emanate from it.

This should not lead to the conclusion that a straight and direct line can be drawn between state policy and the capitalist class forces it represents. There are a variety of factors that complicate this picture, not the least of which is the fact that states often

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[112] Jerome Klassen, "Introduction: Empire, Afghanistan and Canadian Foreign Policy," in Jerome Klassen and Greg Albo, ed., *Empire's Ally: Canada and the War in Afghanistan*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2013, p. 17.
[113] Jerome Klassen, *Empire's Ally*, p. 18.

represent a variety of class actors, themselves in contradiction. Indeed, at any given moment, the state encompasses a wide range of interests – mediating those interests is its very purpose – and the struggles within the state between those forces are certainly of some significance. Furthermore, even states that are thoroughly dominated by a particular class are subject to contestation from outside; a Canadian state held solidly by a concentrated Canadian capitalist class still has to contend with the forces that would struggle against it, from working class organizations to civil society institutions to popular media and so on. The point, then, is not to deny that the state is a profoundly complicated network of interests. Rather, it is to assert – as Klassen does above – that the modern nation state is fundamentally a formation designed to protect and promote the interests of capital in general and national capital in particular.

THE CONTEMPORARY TURN – MILITARISM AND IMPERIALISM

With this in mind, and recalling the arguments by Carroll, Burgess, and others that the Canadian capitalist class has consolidated into a coherent formation that can exert its unique pressure on the Canadian state, I will now turn to the concrete shift in Canadian foreign policy that began in the early 1990s but has become manifest most dramatically in the past decade. Indeed, if one were to pick up the narrative of Canadian foreign policy from the "peacekeeping moment" and try to connect it to contemporary Canada, one would find a profound rupture. As Stephen Staples has documented, Canada's participation in peacekeeping went into rapid decline in the 1990s and has all but disappeared completely from Canadian policy today. In 1991, Canada contributed around 10% of U.N. peacekeeping personnel; by 2006, that number had dropped to less

than 0.01%.[114] To the extent that "peacekeeping" is still mobilized rhetorically to justify Canadian militarism, it has gone from an exaggeration to an outright myth.

Documenting the full extent of the new Canadian imperialism requires multiple volumes. A few attempts have been made already to build this scholarship, including Todd Gordon's *Imperialist Canada* and Jerome Klassen and Greg Albo's *Empire's Ally*, both of which I have drawn from significantly in this chapter. Nevertheless, the project is in its infancy, and this dissertation looks to add a crucial piece of what must necessarily be a long and exhaustive process. Rather than attempt to document the new Canadian imperialism in detail, I will simply note a series of key interventions that highlight the shift, and draw out a few of the structural changes in Canadian policies and institutional frameworks that have accompanied the shift and that suggest an attempt to cement the new imperialism as a pillar of Canadian politics over the middle term. I will also offer a few brief thoughts on why these changes have taken place in this particular moment.

Beginning in the early 1990s, Canada became increasingly engaged in military adventures beyond its borders. Canada was an active participant in the war against Iraq in 1991, though it expressed reservations, and it also played a role in the continuous bombing campaigns in that country throughout the decade. In 1993, Canada intervened in Somalia, ostensibly in a peacekeeping role, and left in disgrace after its soldiers were implicated in sadistic torture of Somali prisoners. Canada took a lead role in NATO's bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999, became a prominent part of the occupation of Afghanistan in 2001, and made a variety of contributions to the U.S. invasion of Iraq in

[114] Steven Staples, "Marching Orders: How Canada abandoned peacekeeping – and why the UN needs us now more than ever," Ottawa, Council of Canadians, 2006, p. 1.

2003, despite a rhetorical stance that suggested otherwise.[115] In 2004, Canada played a key military role in the overthrow of Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, and subsequently stayed on as a semi-permanent force, propping up the regime that replaced Aristide and training the Haitian police to carry out violent counter-insurgency actions against Aristide supporters. In 2011, Canada carried out bombing raids against Libya, and in 2013, the Canadian military was in Mali supporting a French invasion.[116]

There is much to say about each of these interventions: the scale of civilian casualties and human suffering inflicted, the degree of institutional and infrastructural damage doled out, the range of spurious justifications offered in each case, the colonial logic and tactics employed, and how dramatically these actions contradict the rhetoric of "freedom, democracy and good governance" that Canadian politics and policy typically deploys. Moreover, this is simply a sketch of the most obvious examples where Canada has used direct military intervention as a tool of foreign policy. They do not cover the wide range of imperial relationships that Canada has cultivated without resorting to using its own military forces. This dissertation, of course, will detail the case of Honduras, which fits into this latter category. As such, my assessment of those particular interventions will be sparse; rather, I seek here to briefly locate this new posture within

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[115] It is, certainly, noteworthy that Canada refused to join the so-called "coalition of the willing" to invade Iraq. Indeed, it prompted an angry reaction from the Canadian far right, as evidenced in an impromptu live debate between hockey pundits Ron McLean and Don Cherry, the latter of whom chastised the Canadian government for refusing to support the U.S. invasion. Nevertheless, while Canada's decision not to join George W. Bush's war seems to be inconsistent with the pattern, it actually demonstrates the extent to which Canadian "deep integration" with the United States is limited by the actual independence of Canadian foreign policy. Canada's decision not to join the "coalition of the willing," then, illustrates that could have similarly refused to participate in a variety of other military adventures with the United States. Canada's decision to distance itself from the war in Iraq, moreover, should not be overstated; Canadians did, in fact, participate in that campaign in a variety of capacities (more detail below) and it is well understood that Canada took on a larger role in Afghanistan to take pressure off U.S. and British forces being re-deployed to Iraq.

[116] This is a very broad sketch of Canada's military entanglements in the past two decades. For a more comprehensive treatment of these details, please see Yves Engler, *The Black Book of Canadian Foreign Policy*, Black Point, Fernwood, 2009.

the broader political economic trajectory in Canada to provide a framework for my analysis of Canada's actions in Honduras.

It is no coincidence that as Canadian capital has turned outward, Canadian foreign policy has become increasingly – and increasingly violently – focused on the creation and protection of market-friendly regimes in the Global South. It is similarly unsurprising that this project has necessarily entailed closer collaboration with the United States, whose government has more or less the same macroeconomic goal, even if its capitalists find themselves periodically in competition with Canadian firms. Indeed, the consolidation of Canadian capital, as described above, has put it in a position to expand into the Global South in the hopes of procuring ever-greater profits, and that expansion is reflected in the growth of Canadian FDI. What must not be forgotten, however, is that while "searching for profits" may, perhaps, sound innocuous, the concrete process through which this takes place is anything but. Marx's descriptions in the first volume of *Capital,* of the violence – physical, structural, material, and spiritual – inherent in "so-called primitive accumulation," or the creating of conditions for capitalist production, is instructive:

> In actual history, it is a notorious fact that conquest, enslavement, robbery, murder, in short, force, play the greatest part... the capital-relation presupposes a complete separation between the workers and the ownership of the conditions for the realization of their labour. As soon as capitalist production stands on its own feet, it not only maintains this separation, but reproduces it on a constantly expanding scale... So-called primitive accumulation, therefore, is nothing else than the historical process of divorcing the producer from the means of production... the history of their expropriation is written in the annals of mankind in letters of blood and fire.[117]

[117] Karl Marx, *Capital, Vol. I,* London, Penguin, 1990, p. 874-875.

And while some of the specific circumstances change, the overarching dynamics remain the same with Canada's foreign enterprises today; indeed, the very act of investing capital abroad is predicated on the idea that there are greater profits to be made there than by comparable investments at home, and this calculation is almost always based on the availability of cheap and easily exploitable labour.[118] It is, then, an inherently violent process in the first place.

The violence of the profit-seeking behaviour of Canadian corporations abroad engenders resistance virtually wherever it goes. This is hardly a surprise. People generally do not like being subject to violence without their consent and typically organize against it, as several centuries of class struggle demonstrate.[119] What would come as a surprise to those who accept Canadian rhetoric about freedom, democracy, peace, etc., is the fact that the Canadian state now employs all manner of violent tactics to smother the dissent generated by its corporations' behaviour. Interventions in local politics, including the overthrow of governments, assassinations of activists organizing against Canadian firms, support for repressive institutions that defy popular will, and even military intervention are all part of Canada's toolkit in those places where its capital is invested and even some places where it is not.

These activities are well-documented and it will suffice to mention only a few of them here. In April 2013, Alberto Rotondo, head of security for the San Rafael mine in Guatemala, owned by Canadian mining company Tahoe Resources, ordered the

[118] Of course, it is not only about labour. In the contemporary mining sector, for instance, the key component is, increasingly, the access to resources and the ability of foreign companies to access those resources in the cheapest and quickest way possible. This usually means employing mining practices that are devastating to the environment upon which local and regional communities rely. These problems will be explored in greater detail across this dissertation.

[119] David McNally, *Another World is Possible: Globalization and Anti-Capitalism*, 3rd ed, Winnipeg, Arbeiter Ring, 2009, p. 267-403.

assassination of Guatemalan activists protesting the company's social and environmental record.[120] Similar stories dog the activities of Canadian companies across Latin America. In Mexico, after a leading community activist against Calgary-based Blackfire Exploration was murdered, the Canadian government ignored some 1400 letters of concern about the Blackfire-sanctioned (and likely Blackfire-ordered) murder. Instead, the Department of Foreign and International Affairs and Trade (DFAIT) worked with the company to help it sue the local government that had suspended its activities after the assassination. According to a Mining Watch report:

> Mere days after a damning report about the company was circulated to the highest echelons of the Canadian government, Canadian authorities sought advice for the company about how to sue the [Mexican subnational] state of Chiapas under NAFTA for having closed the mine.[121]

Canadian companies operating in Central America appear to have plenty of support from the Canadian state in asserting their rights against local governments, even when their behaviour is engendering all manner of social harm and opposition. Environmental codes in Costa Rica were strengthened by its government in 2011, leading to the halt of operations of the Las Crucitas gold mine, owned by Calgary-based Infinito, which did not meet the new environmental criteria set by the government. The company is currently building momentum to launch a $1 billion lawsuit against the government of Costa Rica under the terms of the Canada-Costa Rica free trade agreement.[122] Even CIDA – the Canadian government organization that was ostensibly most committed to doing "development" work abroad until its disbanding in 2013 – was implicated in imperial

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[120] "Alberto Rotondo ejecutivo de minera dio orden para matar," *La Hora Guatemala*, May 9, 2013.
[121] Rick Arnold, quoted in Mining Watch Canada, "Report Reveals how Canadian Diplomacy Supported Deadly Blackfire Mining Project," May 6, 2013.
[122] L. Arias, "Canadian firm threatens $1 billion lawsuit against Costa Rica," *Tico Times*, April 4, 2013.

violence. As Toby Moorsom argued, a growing portion of CIDA funding was diverted over the past two decades to firms – sometimes themselves Canadian – that built the military hardware that repressed activists struggling against Canadian mining companies.[123]

While the attention of Canadian imperialism has been most typically focused on those places where significant amounts of capital are invested, the shift in Canadian foreign policy is far deeper than simply working to protect particular firms' investments. As Greg Albo details in *Empire's Ally*, the Canadian state has made a conscious decision to integrate more deeply with the machine of U.S. imperialism, on the understanding that Canadian firms will benefit from that cooperation. While "military parasitism" was once an effective strategy for building the capacities of the Canadian capitalist class and mediating class conflict at home, three factors have worked to change that: first, the consolidation and growth of Canadian capital has meant that it, like all capitalist classes, has had to contend with periodic crises of overaccumulation, setting in whenever there are not immediately available sources of profitable investment. As David Harvey details in *The New Imperialism*, one solution to this problem is geographic expansion into Global South states where a variety of violent practices can make possible an "accumulation by dispossession," whereby profits can be sustained and expanded on the basis of plunder, bullying of governments, and greater exploitation.[124] Second, a sustained neoliberal assault has flattened out the prospects for working class organizing in Canada, leaving the state in a position to worry far less about protecting the welfare state and freeing up resources to expand its military. Finally, the end of the Cold War put

[123] Toby Moorsom, "Canada's tough-guy cop to 'aid' world's poor," *Al-Jazeera Online*, April 4, 2013.
[124] David Harvey, *The New Imperialism*, p. 137-183.

the United States in a position to redefine the nature of its alliances; no longer facing existential danger in the spectre of an international communist revolution, the United States is now able to discipline its allies by insisting that they contribute to the military aggression that is necessary to maintain the inequalities of the world market system.[125] Canada, anxious to ensure that it continues to have access to the markets where its firms make some of their greatest profits, has made it a priority to demonstrate to the United States that it is a willing and able component of the new imperial order, such that it may reap its rewards.[126]

Canada, then, has emerged as a secondary component of the new imperialism. As Albo concludes:

> The Canadian state recognized the continental relationship as the means by which it preserves a secondary position in the world order and, therefore, the necessity of following U.S. dictates and doctrines in matters of foreign policy. In fact, in recasting its foreign policy after 9/11, the Canadian state had the support of a wide range of economic interests – notably the Canadian Council of Chief Executives and the C.D. Howe Institute... to this end, Canadian governments sought to increase the operational capacity of the military, to subordinate other international activities to concerns of national and continental security, and to reorganize the administrative apparatus of the state accordingly.[127]

Crucial here is the nuanced way in which Albo addresses continental integration – which is an undeniable development of post-Cold War and especially post-9/11 Canadian foreign policy – as a function not of Canada's weakness but, rather, as a conscious

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[125] There is no consensus among scholars of contemporary empire on whether the U.S. state can maintain its dominant position for much longer. Arguably, its adventures in the Middle East over the past decade have left it with less capacity to police that region, as perhaps evidenced in its inability to control the dynamics of the Arab Spring and its subsequent revolutionary movements. Nevertheless, it is clear that, at least for the time being, the United States remains central to the smooth functioning of global capitalism and, as such, it can still make significant demands upon those states which, like Canada, find themselves secondary components in the U.S.-centred imperial order.

[126] Greg Albo, "Empire's Ally," *Canadian Dimension* 40, No. 6, 2006, p. 54-60.

[127] Albo, *Empire's Ally*, p. 255.

strategy of a capitalist state seeking to position itself most effectively for its own reproduction. This is an important corrective to the work cited above from the *Whose Canada?* collection, which saw this integration as being primarily imposed on Canada from outside, rather than chosen from within.

Nevertheless, both sides of this debate agree that the changes inherent in the "deep integration" project are profound and structural, and that they are designed to recast Canadian foreign policy for years to come. Over the past decade, institutional power has been increasingly centred around the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and the Department of National Defence (DND) as a variety of other state structures have been forced to fall into subordinate positions, most notably the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAIT) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), whose merger into one department was announced in 2013.[128] As early as 2006, Canadian policy-making was being actively embedded in continental security projects and placed under the oversight of the security apparatus, even as the DND has dramatically increased its funding for strategic studies in Canadian universities through the Security and Defence Forum,[129] buttressing an increasingly influential right wing pro-military stream within the discipline of International Relations, especially in Canadian Foreign Policy and Security Studies.[130] As Canadian foreign policy is increasingly being brought under the control of the military, that apparatus is engaged in the much-maligned "deep integration" project with the U.S. defence apparatus, especially in the "Fortress North America" linkages

[128] "CIDA's Dead-End Merger," The McLeod Group, May 18, 2013. Available at: http://www.mcleodgroup.ca/2013/05/18/cidas-dead-end-merger/

[129] Steven Staples, "Fortress North America," p. 162-163.

[130] Even York University's ostensibly critical version of Security Studies maintains close links to the Canadian military establishment; military recruiters are invited to the campus to entice graduate students into their programs with the promise of lucrative scholarships, and the York Centre for International Security Studies (YCISS) regularly invites the organic intellectuals of Canada's military to speak as panellists and keynotes at its conferences.

designed to securitize the geography of accumulation at home.[131] Canada has joined the United States in missile defence system planning, has harmonized much of its maritime security apparatus with the U.S., and has entered into a variety of intensified continental military command chains at the recommendation of the Bi-National Planning Group (BPG), an advisory council established under NORAD to concretize many of the "deep integration" plans.[132] Indeed, as Neil Braganza noted in 2006, the BPG and much of the Canadian military intelligentsia argued throughout the 2000s that the Canadian Forces needed to increase its "interoperability" with the U.S. military, though Braganza is careful not to fall into the left nationalist trap:

> Far from weakening the Canadian state, interoperability with the U.S. gives it a special role to play in the imperial order. What is more, fears that interoperability threatens Canadian autonomy can actually fuel arguments for more defence spending.[133]

Indeed, the Canadian military itself is growing faster than ever; in the most obvious manifestation of the growing militarization of the Canadian state, the actual numbers of soldiers have steadily increased and have now reached over 100,000 in regular and reserve forces. Meanwhile, the military itself has seen substantial renovation and reformulation, both in terms of its operational capacity (increasingly organized to fight urban counterinsurgency wars on multiple fronts) and the networks of interoperability noted by Braganza (devised to make the Canadian military adaptable to collaborating with continental allies as well as local military and police forces wherever it may be deployed.) In addition, of course, the last decade has seen the most dramatic escalation of military budgeting since the Second World War, with the Canadian state

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[131] Greg Albo, "Empire's Ally," p. 55-59.
[132] Steven Staples, "Fortress North America," p. 163-170.
[133] Neil Braganza, "The Canadian Military Order," *New Socialist*, No. 54, November-January 2005/2006, p. 18.

spending over $18 billion on the military in 2008/09 alone and sparking some controversy with a proposal to spend an additional $25 billion on a new fleet of fighter jets.

It is worth pausing on those figures briefly to take stock of their rising simultaneously to the financial crisis that engendered a wholesale adoption of the austerity agenda. Indeed, the spike in military spending has taken place alongside a concerted imposition of austerity on working Canadians, as jobs have been slashed, wages have been hammered down, and strikes have been broken.[134] The Canadian corporate elite continues to enjoy relatively lax taxation, but user-fees and taxes have been raised for everyone else, ranging from transit systems to privatized health services and rising tuition fees. Federally funded organizations that provide valuable services to communities are being scuttled or starved of resources; Indigenous, environmental, LGBT and women's organizations have been particularly targeted.[135] Direct support for people is diminishing, as reflected in decreases in social housing and assistance; for instance, after significant structural changes, less than half of unemployed Canadians today even qualify for Employment Insurance (EI.) In sum, working poverty and precarity are becoming more and more common – over 10% of Canadians are now living

[134] In Ontario, for instance, a string of public sector unions had strikes ended by back-to-work legislation, beginning with part-time academic workers at York University, of which I was a member, whose targeting for strikebreaking legislation was condemned by the International Labour Organization as unwarranted. CUPE, "Ontario Government condemned for abusing back-to-work legislation," Canadian Union of Public Employees, Press Release, June 20, 2011. Available at: http://cupe.ca/government/ontario-government-condemned-abusing . Since that time, unions have been forced back to work by federal and provincial legislation, from pilots and flight attendants to transit workers to librarians to postal employees and teachers.

[135] Among many organizations that have faced cuts: Climate Action Network, Native Women's Association, Sisters in Spirit, Canadian Child Care Federation, Centre for Spanish Speaking Peoples, Statistics Canada, Canadian Arab Federation, First Nations Child and Family Caring Society, Canadian Council for International Cooperation.

below the poverty line and almost half of the Canadian workforce works precariously – even as there is less and less support for those who are struggling.[136]

The disjuncture between increased military spending and support for working Canadians has aroused some criticism, but that criticism has been muted and diluted by a variety of factors. Notable among them are, first, the persistence of the left nationalist argument that Canada is an unfortunate "victim" of U.S. domination, which absolves the Canadian state of agency in its imperial shuffle. The second is a remarkable militarization of Canadian culture – a matter I plan to explore in my post-doctoral research – which manifests itself in a new Canadian patriotism and a "support the troops" discipline hitherto absent in Canadian popular consciousness. Perhaps the best example of this dynamic is to be found in the spectacle of Canadian hockey, and the collaboration between the military, the National Hockey League, the individual franchise owners, and the Canadian media, especially the public Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), in relentlessly celebrating the Canadian Armed Forces at hockey games, a cultural phenomena undeniably woven into the fabric of Canadian popular culture.[137]

Of course, the ideological discipline being increasingly imposed on Canadians is incomplete, and the inequalities and injustices of Canadian politics continue to engender resistance. Indeed, an emblematic figure of that reaction is Yves Engler, a former hockey player turned political activist whose work has sought to expose the dark underbelly of Canadian foreign policy. Engler's research is driven by a sense that the Canadian

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[136] "It's More Than Poverty," report by United Way Toronto and McMaster University, February 2013. For more detail on the assault on working people in Canada, including immigrant and migrant workers, please see Thom Workman, *If You're In My Way I'm Walking: The Assault on Working People Since 1970*, Winnipeg, Fernwood, 2009.

[137] Tyler Shipley, "Militarism and Sports, Part II (A Response)," *Left Hook,* April 4, 2013. Available at: http://lefthookjournal.wordpress.com/2013/04/04/militarism-and-sports-part-ii-a-response/

government has betrayed the ideals he was taught as a child. It is powerful work insofar as it mobilizes a wealth of empirical data on the injustices of Canadian military and diplomatic behaviour. In the introduction to *The Black Book of Canadian Foreign Policy*, Engler entreats Canadians to take responsibility for "what is done in our name" and insists upon a revision of the old mythology of peacekeeping and the assumed benevolence of Canadian intentions.

Nevertheless, Engler's work, while critical, probing, and valuable, remains theoretically inconsistent and insufficient; Engler appears convinced that Canadian policy could be better if the right people, with the right ideas, simply got hold of the reins.

> A primary cause of Canada's poor behaviour around the world is allowing particular self-interest to take precedence over doing what's right... the rule of law is weak in foreign affairs. There are few enforceable regulations governing the international behaviour of governments, corporations and their organizations... so a primary task of Canadian foreign policy should be to promote the rule of law in international affairs.[138]

Engler is right that certain liberal international regulations are not enforced but he is wrong if he thinks that there is no regulation or discipline in international affairs. Quite the contrary, the very foreign policy decisions he decries – overthrowing a government in Haiti or participating in the invasion of Iraq – are examples of the rules of global capitalism *being enforced*. Canada is not contributing to a "weakening" of international structures, it is actively building its capacity to impose and sustain them.

Indeed, without a theory of how the Canadian state functions and who it represents, Engler, like so many critical Canadians, is unable to offer a satisfying *theorization* of Canadian imperialism, even as he assembles an empirical rap sheet that demonstrates rather unequivocally that Canada *behaves* as an imperial power. While this

[138] Engler, *Black Book*, 238-239.

latter project is certainly important, it is crucial that it be supplemented by a complex theoretical understanding of these dynamics. Without it, we are left with the contradictory and incomplete conclusions offered by mainstream and left nationalist analyses. Engler unwittingly falls into the former camp when he proposes that Canadian foreign policy ought to do a better job of enforcing international regulations. After all, one might just as easily say that capitalists ought to share their wealth and wars ought to be outlawed; people committed to social justice would certainly agree, but without a comprehensive theorization of *why* things are the way they are, we can come no closer to actually making the changes we wish to see. What Engler misses is that the Canadian state will not change its behaviour simply because he and many others want it to; the state is an institution that – by its very nature – is responsible to capital and will continue to represent the interests of capital unless and until there is a truly radical rupture either in the form of the state or in the functioning of capitalism.

This dissertation is, by no means, equipped to propose a programmatic alternative to the types of conclusions that Engler offers. Clearly, the theorization I am proposing gestures towards the need for profound and radical change that would de-link Canada from the network of capitalism, in what would necessarily have to be part of a broader global break from the imperatives of capitalism and a shift to a different mode of production that would offer greater prospects for radical democracy, personal freedom, creative expression, and social justice. Sustained discussion of this ambitious objective is beyond the scope of this dissertation and, as such, will not be sketched out in any detail. In fact, in lieu of proposing a concrete revolutionary strategy, this project might easily appear similar in its conclusions to Engler; after all, it *would* be better if Ottawa behaved

less aggressively in the world and if there is no movement building to radically alter the course of Canadian politics, surely minor adjustments are better than nothing.

Nevertheless, to the extent that this project actually implies certain policy changes, I would insist that they be understood as precursors to the broader changes that will be necessary if there is to be any long-term change. I defer here to Greg Albo, who offers a useful articulation of this compromise. After detailing five points of action that the Canadian state should take, which do not look so different from those proposed by Engler and include immediate withdrawal from Afghanistan and support for stronger international regulations on capital, Albo argues:

> These proposals constitute a minimal platform for remaking Canadian foreign policy. This platform would reinforce democratic sovereignty and advance the struggle for an equalizing world order. It stands opposed to the neoliberal system built around the internationalization of capital and the disciplinary militarism of Canadian and western imperialism. To put forward such a democratic and egalitarian agenda in the current world order means confronting U.S. hegemony and, more directly, *the domestic political and social relations that underpin Canadian imperialism.* Avoiding the need for radical social transformation in the hope of returning to a more U.N.-centred multilateralism is to fall prey to the fictions of a liberal world order. Indeed the belief that Canadian foreign policy has been – or can be – a force for a more just or balanced world has been one of the most crippling illusions of political life in Canada, particularly in progressive circles.[139]

Indeed, while Albo's particular demands of Canadian policy – reducing the military, separating foreign aid from foreign investment, etc – are not so different from those put forward by liberal and left nationalist camps, his broader project is fundamentally different because his understanding of the Canadian state is so different. For Albo, foreign policy is not a disconnected pursuit driven by particular individuals' ideas; it is a

[139] Albo, *Empire's Ally*, p. 268. (Emphasis mine.)

direct manifestation of domestic and international social relations, a product of the dynamics of global capitalism. As a result, changes to that foreign policy can only be superficial and short term if they are not part of a broader challenge to the social relations from which they are derived.

CANADA'S MISSED OPPORTUNITY?

All of this has raised the question – posed often in the past few years by scholars looking at Canadian relations with Latin America – of whether Canada has "missed an opportunity," opened up by the end of the Cold War, for more progressive engagement with the Global South, or whether it has, indeed, seized upon the opportunity it was really looking for: to extract ever greater wealth from foreign land and people. Ricardo Grinspun and Yasmine Shamsie raise this question in a 2010 article in the *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies,* reviewing the developments since Canada's 2007 "re-engagement" with the Americas. They argue that, despite proposing three key priorities for the region that included the promotion of democracy and the advancement of social justice, Canada has only actually pursued one goal: the deepening of the neoliberal development model that has so consistently and completely failed to bring equitable or sustainable economic growth for Latin America.

> We contend that Canadian support for democracy, human rights, and sustainable development is being weakened by (1) the government's persistent adherence to a neoliberal development model and (2) its steadfast support for U.S. geostrategic interests in the continent, even when they run counter to humane internationalism objectives.[140]

The primary institutions of the Canadian ruling class, and the media and intellectual strands that represent them, continue to talk about Canadian engagement in Latin

[140] Ricardo Grinspun and Yasmine Shamsie, "Canada's Missed Opportunity," p. 174.

America as being benevolent. The *Canadian Military Journal* boasts that Canada is a positive role model in Latin America and that it collaborates with Latin American militaries because they are often "the only reliable organ of government that has the ability to maintain order or mount a credible force against transnational threats." The Canadian Forces, they insist, "help build operational and institutional capacities" of the countries to which they are sent, and "have a role to play in advancing the government's agenda under the security pillar of [Canada's] engagement [in Latin America.]"[141]

Grinspun and Shamsie, by contrast, articulate what many in the community of Canadian scholarship on Latin America and the Caribbean have been saying since 2007: that Canada has prioritized its commitment to its own neoliberal agenda over its other goals in Latin America and that the Canadian military is often used to bolster that agenda. That is, they argue that the role of the military has increasingly been to support the imposition of neoliberalism, especially as Canada has quickly become the world's third largest investor in the region.[142] Nevertheless, Grinspun and Shamsie, like many in the field, cling to the assumption that Canada pushes that neoliberal model because it believes neoliberalism will bring positive development for people in Latin America; that is, they rightly critique Canadian emphasis on neoliberal development models but attribute Canada's messianic adherence to that model to a misreading of its results, at best, or a conservative political preference, at worst.[143] In either case, the assumption, again, is that Canadian policy could be different – could be a force for "good" – if only the policymakers would listen to those of us who are researching the effects of

[141] Walter Natyncyk and Nancy MacKinnon, "Canada and the Americas," p. 6-10.
[142] Todd Gordon, "Positioning Itself in the Andes: Critical Reflections on Canada's Relations with Colombia," *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* Vol. 35, No. 70, p. 56.
[143] Ricardo Grinspun and Yasmine Shamsie, "Canada's Missed Opportunity," 179.

neoliberalism in Latin America. This critique, and the assumptions behind it, has animated much of the discussion and debate that has taken place at the last three annual congresses of the Canadian Association of Latin American and Caribbean Studies (CALACS) of which I have been a part.

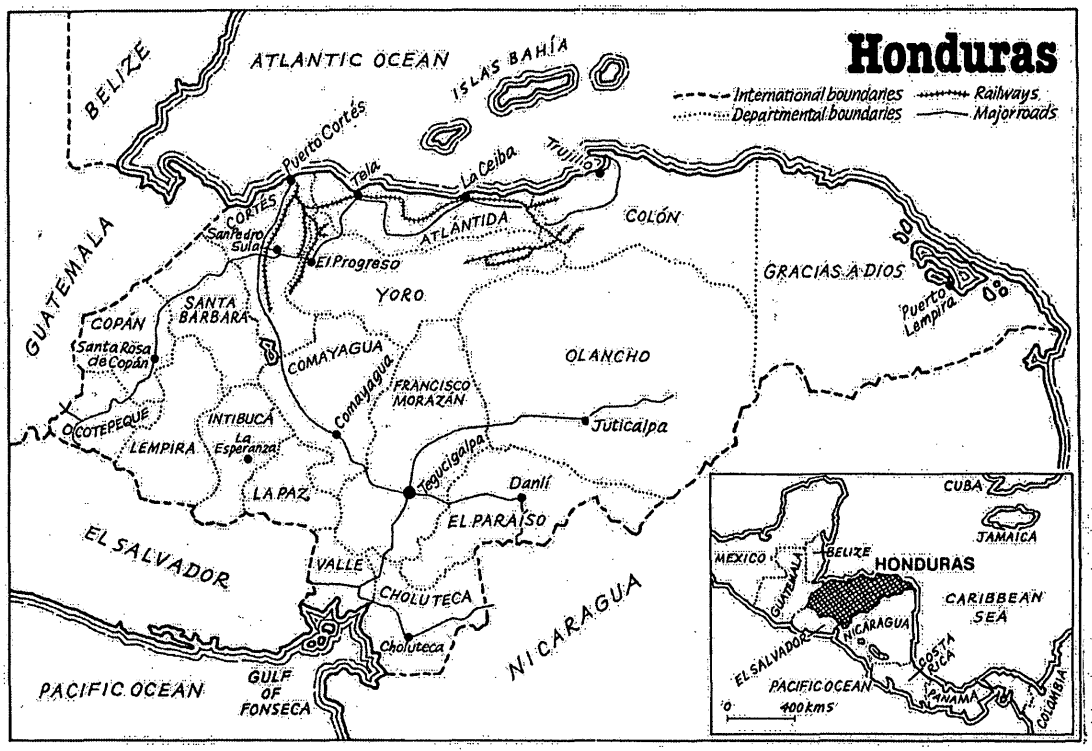
I submit, in contrast to that prevailing position, that Canada has not simply *prioritized* the goals of neoliberal capital accumulation over other goals but, rather, that the project of capital accumulation is in fundamental contradiction with the advancement of true democracy or social justice. Indeed, it is the contention of this dissertation that Canadian policy, stemming as it does from the relations of production in which Canada is embedded, has long been invested in reaping the benefits of an imperial world order. But, as a result of changes in the global political economy in which Canadian capital is located, Canadian policy has become increasingly aggressive in its particular adaptations of imperialism and Canada has emerged as a crucial, secondary component in the imperial system. This has been manifest in a whole variety of policy shifts over the past two decades and in the dramatic restructuring of the Canadian state and military to facilitate an escalation and institutionalization of those shifts.

Mainstream understandings of Canadian politics have consistently failed to acknowledge or comprehend these shifts, and left nationalist analyses have seized upon the symptoms of the shifts but failed to recognize their genesis, leading them to wrongheaded conclusions that would seek to strengthen Canadian sovereignty and independence in the realm of policy making. What they miss is that Canada is already sovereign and independent and is using that power to pursue an imperialist foreign policy that adapts, foments, creates and relies upon profound social injustice in order to

accomplish its aims. From this starting point, then, the remainder of this dissertation will document in detail the manifestations of Canadian imperialism in one country, Honduras, and compare the actions of the Canadian ruling classes to the rhetoric it mobilizes, to give detail, nuance, and urgency to the analysis provided in this chapter.

CHAPTER THREE – FIVE CENTURIES OF IMPERIALISM IN HONDURAS

Figure 3.1: Political Map of Honduras[144]



[144] Source: Richard Lapper, *Honduras: State For Sale*, London, Latin American Bureau, 1985, p. iv.

This dissertation is, fundamentally, an assessment of Canadian foreign policy. Nevertheless, no such assessment can proceed without a complicated understanding of the places and peoples that are affected by the policies in question. Indeed, one of the critiques that has often been made of Canadian policy in Central America is that it consistently fails to reflect an understanding of Central American realities in their appropriate historical context and, as a result, it proceeds with decisions and initiatives that undermine the needs and interests the people it most directly affects.[145] This critique, of course, assumes much about the general goals of Canadian foreign policy; as Chapter 2 argues, the idea that the Canadian state can be counted on to pursue even well-intentioned policy options is one that looks increasingly unlikely. Indeed, what I hope to show in this study is that the failure to understand context is not *simply* a failure of knowledge and understanding, but the inevitable result of a foreign policy based on social interests antagonistic to those of the people of the region. This claim, however, can only be advanced on the basis of a solid foundational understanding of the conditions in which Canadian foreign policy is intervening; without that basis it would be impossible to adequately assess those policies. As such, the analysis of Canadian policy towards Honduras will proceed only following a discussion of Honduran history and the legacy of colonialism and foreign interference that – as I will argue in Chapters 5 and 6 – Canada is now actively perpetuating. This chapter, then, will trace the legacy of the initial conquest

[145] This is a generous interpretation, but one that carried considerably more validity when it was being made in the 1970s and 1980s, as per the analysis I offer of the Latin America Working Group (LAWG) in Chapter 1. For instance, in 1990, Tim Draimin, Cecelia Rocha and Liisa North argued that Canadian development assistance programs were contributing to a worsening of conditions for people in Central America, in part because policy makers and parliamentarians failed to fully grasp the complexity of the causes of poverty, explaining that "they have not fully recognized that poverty in the region is a consequence of the unequal distribution of resources and political power." Tim Draimin, Cecelia Rocha and Liisa North, "Canada's Development Assistance Programs and Economic Relations with Central America," in Liisa North and CAPA, ed., *Between War and Peace in Central America: Choices for Canada*, Toronto, Between the Lines, 1990, p. 95.

of Indigenous civilizations and Honduras' unique historical trajectory within Central America, while chapter 4 will detail contemporary problems and the immediate context of the June 2009 coup with which this dissertation is preoccupied.

SPANISH COLONIZATION AND GENOCIDE

To say that nearly all of Honduran history has been forged in the fires of colonial occupation is not hyperbole but historical fact; even the word 'Honduras' itself, which translates from Spanish as 'the watery depths,' was given by none other than Spanish *conquistador* Christopher Columbus himself,[146] as he and his crew thanked their god in 1502 for delivering their ships from the depths off the north coast.[147] Of course, prior to Columbus' arrival – before there was a 'Honduras' – there were thousands of years of social, political, and cultural history with records of human civilization dating as far back as the second millennium B.C.E.[148] Civilizations like the Maya, Lenca, Pipil, Nahuatl, Jicaque, Paya, Chorotega, and Sumu[149] – the surviving descendants of whom we refer to as Indigenous peoples – varied as much in size and scope as in political and cultural forms, such that generalizing about them is an exercise in futility, though Europeans have long done so under the label of 'Indians.'[150] Noteworthy among these civilizations was

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[146] James A. Morris, *Honduras: Caudillo Politics and Military Rulers*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1984, p. 1.

[147] This was also how the Honduran department of 'Gracias a Dios' (thanks to God) got its name. Robert S. Chamberlain, *The Conquest and Colonization of Honduras, 1502-1550*, New York, Octagon Books, 1966, p. 10.

[148] Ralph Woodward Jr, *Central America: A Nation Divided*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 10.

[149] It is worth noting that the Sumu experience had unique consequences. Although most of the Sumu lived in what is now Nicaragua, it was a sub-group of the Sumu who lived on the Atlantic Coast (near what is now Gracias a Dios) whose intermarriage and social mixing – under the auspices of colonial domination – with European sailors and colonists, as well as escaped African slaves whose ship landed at Gracias a Dios in the 16th century, led to the emergence of a separate ethnic and social identity, known as the Miskitu. The formation of the Miskitu is addressed in Claudia García, *The Making of the Miskitu People of Nicaragua*, Doctoral Dissertation at Uppsala University, 1996.

[150] Linda Newson, *The Cost of Conquest: Indian Decline in Honduras Under Spanish Rule*, London, Westview Press, 1986.

that of the Maya which, at its height around 500 C.E., was among the most complex tributary societies in the world. One of its greatest city-states was Copán, located in contemporary Honduras near its western border with Guatemala, where some of the great Mayan accomplishments took place, including the development of detailed calendars and numerical systems, the construction of courts and arenas that could host over fifty-thousand people, and the nurturing of the study of astronomy that allowed Mayan priests to predict solar eclipses and calculate the revolutions of the planet Venus. As Friedrich Katz described in 1969:

> The Maya demonstrate the highest intellectual achievements to be found in pre-Columbian America: the calendar, mathematics and graphology reached a stage of development among them that no other American people, except maybe the Olmecs, equalled... the classic period in the region of the Maya is distinguished by a spectacular flowering of architecture, sculpture, painting and learning.[151]

These accomplishments are often portrayed as archaeological oddities; witness the 2012 feature exhibit *Maya: Secrets of their Ancient World* at the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) in Toronto, which presented Mayan civilization as ancient and mysterious, a relic of an era of mysticism and superstition so backward and irrational that it may hold the key to primeval secrets about the nature of humanity or the meaning of life, long forgotten by the fast-moving modern society constructed by European civilization.[152] Before returning to this characterization, it is worth noting that these religious, artistic, or scientific advances were not the product of some vaguely-alien mystical force but, rather, of a complex social and political system that was able to sustain a large population and create the conditions under which some people could

[151] Friedrich Katz, *The Ancient American Civilizations*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1972, p. 56, 60.
[152] Justin Jennings, Martha Cuevas García and Roberto López Bravo, *Maya: Secrets of their Ancient World*, Toronto, Royal Ontario Museum Press, 2011.

pursue a variety of activities that were not directly related to survival. In her remarkable survey *Indians of the Americas*, pre-eminent historian and activist Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz has described the complicated civilizations that had risen and fallen in the western hemisphere prior to European conquest. Of the Maya, she writes:

> During the five centuries that the Mayan state prospered [...] a nobility and a priesthood made up the ruling group, the nobility owning cocoa plantations and salt-mines. There was a distinct commercial class, and the cities were authentic urban centres, not simply bureaucratic or religious ones; but ordinary Mayans retained the fundamental features of a clan structure in their communities. They were required to work in the nobles' fields and to pay them rent for use of their land, and also to contribute to the building of roads, temples, noblemen's houses and other structures.[153]

Adding to this picture of a complex tributary society, David Freidel has argued that evidence now suggests that the Mayan civilization constructed complex agricultural systems, which many Eurocentric historians had previously deemed impossible given the 'backwardness' of their society: "an enthusiastic new consensus has formed around the notion that the Mayas not only practiced intensive irrigation and drained field agriculture but outdid their contemporaries in Mesoamerica in this regard."[154] He goes on to argue that shifts towards less complex agricultural techniques, around the time of Spanish conquest, were likely the result of that conquest itself, including Spanish "scorched-earth" tactics, the decimation of populations, and the need to prepare and withstand siege attacks.[155] This new scholarship sits awkwardly alongside previous work that insisted that the Mayan city-state system had largely collapsed under the pressures of its own

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[153] Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *Indians of the Americas*, London, Zed Books, 1984, p. 6.
[154] David Freidel, "Lowland Maya Political Economy: Historical and Archaeological Perspectives in Light of Intensive Agriculture," in Murdo J. MacLeod, ed., *Spaniards and Indians in Southeastern Mesoamerica: Essays on the History of Ethnic Relations*, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1983, p. 41.
[155] Freidel, 43.

conflicts and contradictions by the time of the European conquest. It is beyond the scope of this work to determine precisely what state the Maya civilization was in when the conquerors arrived, but it will suffice to note that Freidel's evidence of such complicated agricultural processes indicates that Mayan civilization, far from the bizarre, irrational construction of Eurocentric historiography, actually possessed a complicated tributary structure, even if that structure was weakened by the 14th century.[156]

But the ancient and mystical framing, exemplified by the ROM exhibit but ubiquitous in Eurocentric scholarship and popular culture, serves only to undermine the actual complexity of Mayan social, political, and economic structures, and to relegate that society to an earlier stage in an imagined teleology of human development where contemporary liberal democratic capitalism is the most advanced stage and any state that has not implemented that model is necessarily lower on the ladder of development. Furthermore, by construing Mayan civilization as ancient and mysterious, it turns attention away from the fact that the Maya still existed at the time of European conquest, albeit weakened by the combined disruptions of internal conflict and war with other Indigenous groups[157] (among other factors which I will return to in a moment.) Indeed, the Maya still exist and fight a ceaseless struggle, in the present, to protect what is left of their civilization.

To be sure, the ROM exhibit – curated in partnership with the *Instituto Nacional de Antropologia y Historia* in Mexico – is careful to acknowledge the persistent existence of the Maya, which is presented as a final panel surprise to viewers who had been encouraged all along to imagine it a civilization long buried by 'history.' The exhibit

[156] For a comprehensive overview of the characteristics of tributary societies, please see Samir Amin, *Eurocentrism* (2nd Ed.), New York, Monthly Review Press, 2009, p. 221-232.
[157] Katz, 76-82.

concludes with a reference to Rigoberta Menchu and popular movements to assert Mayan identity, especially in Guatemala, and the accompanying booklet makes an effort to incorporate the language of identity politics and development studies into its presentation of the contemporary situation.[158] But these are, in the first place, inadequate to capture the historical weight of colonization and genocide, and, what is more, buried as footnotes and sidebars to the central themes of mystery, antiquity and inscrutability. Indeed, the exhibit still refuses to speak to the systematic and wilful destruction of the Indigenous civilizations of Central America, including what was left of the Maya, whether by European conquerors in the 16th century or the militarized states of the 1980s, preferring to focus on a cultural collapse or mixing, rather than violence and murder. The exhibit guidebook limits its discussion of contemporary Maya to the following:

> Protected in places by an almost impenetrable wilderness, the last of the Maya were not brought into the Spanish Empire until 1697 C.E. The conquest shattered many longstanding Mayan traditions. Classic Maya culture, having been re-shaped by elements introduced during the Post-Classic Period, was now more radically altered by the addition of Christian and Spanish ideas. Cattle, pigs and chickens were introduced, new saints and sacraments transformed religious life, and the Roman alphabet replaced glyphs. Despite all these changes, critical aspects of Mayan culture and the echoes of the Classic Maya can still be seen in today's Maya communities. The languages they speak, the ritual calendar that they follow, and the striking profiles of their faces represent just a few of the connections between the present-day Maya and their ancestors.[159]

[158] Jennings, Cuevas García, and López Bravo, 7-15.
[159] Jennings, Cuevas García, and López Bravo, 14.

What could be called the 'archaeologizing,' then, of the Maya serves to subtly avoid what Ward Churchill has called the "little matter of genocide" that began in earnest with Spanish colonization but which continues to this day.[160]

Indeed, the genocide by European conquerors of the Indigenous peoples of North America is well documented and must be counted among the greatest acts of systematic violence in human history. The actual scale of the collapse of Indigenous populations was contested from the outset, but received a jolt of clarity in the 1960s and 70s, with the thorough and important work of Sherburne F. Cooke and Woodrow W. Borah, whose analyses of the population declines were particularly useful in the cases of Mexico and the island of Hispaniola (contemporary Haiti and the Dominican Republic). They understood that their work on pre-conquest demographics held enormous political significance in terms of the relative 'guilt' it conferred to European colonizers.[161] In Central Mexico, Cook and Borah demonstrated that there was a monumental collapse in the Indigenous population from some 25 million in 1518 to barely 1 million in 1605[162] and on Hispaniola, they confirmed Bartolomé de Las Casas' initial claims – dismissed at rhetoric in the 16th century when he made them – that at least 4 million people were wiped out in less than a century.[163]

Similar work was taken up by historical demographers like N.D. Cook and Jaramillo Uribe for different regions in Latin America and was brought together into a coherent and convincing picture, in 1974, by Nicolás Sánchez-Albornoz, whose careful

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[160] Ward Churchill, *A Little Matter of Genocide: Holocaust and Denial in the Americas, 1492 to the Present,* City Lights Books, 1997.
[161] Woodrow W. Borah, "The Historical Demography of Aboriginal and Colonial America: An Attempt at Perspective," in William M. Denevan, *The Native Population of the Americas in 1492*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1976, p. 19.
[162] Sherburne F. Cook and Woodrow Borah, *Essays in Population History: Mexico and the Caribbean, Vol I*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1971, p. viii
[163] Cook and Borah, 407.

conclusions lent much credence to the supposition – put forward by Henry F. Dobyns in 1966 and reproduced by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz in 1984 - that the civilizations of the Americas on the eve of the arrival of Columbus were populated by at least 100 million people, nearly twice the population of Europe at the time.[164] Sánchez-Albornoz builds a convincing case that the rate of decline seen in Central Mexico could be connected with populations figures elsewhere and cautiously generalized to the entire region, such that an estimated reduction in the Indigenous population to less than 10 million in the space of a century and a half is not an unreasonable claim.[165] As Sánchez-Albornoz puts it, "it is hard to grasp what these cold figures mean in human terms."[166]

Eurocentric scholarship spent much of the last five centuries denying the size and scope of the destruction of Indigenous civilization. As recently as 1954, A. Rosenblat insisted that the decline had been from around 13 million to 10 million.[167] When that discourse has failed to convince, it has often emphasized the role played by the spread of "old world" diseases like smallpox and plague, framing the collapse as "historical accident" emerging from the contact between distinct cultures with different immunities.[168] It is clear that European conquerors knew that disease was decimating Indigenous civilizations and, at times, actively worked to spread disease for precisely that

[164] Dunbar-Ortiz, 8.
[165] Sánchez-Albornoz, 39-66.
[166] Sánchez-Albornoz, 48.
[167] Sánchez-Albornoz, 39.
[168] Most of the historical demography on the subject fits – more or less – into this framework though some, like Cook and Borah and Sanchez-Albornoz, are much more measured in their approach to the causes of Indigenous population decline. Nevertheless, even the introduction to Murdo MacLeod's important primer *Spanish Central America*, an otherwise important and useful benchmark for the study of the region between conquest and independence, falls into this discourse, privileging a discussion of the spread of disease over the forms of colonial aggression that made such a holocaust possible. See Murdo J. MacLeod, *Spanish Central America: A Socioeconomic History, 1520-1720*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 2008, p. 1-20.

end,[169] but it is also undeniable that disease – rather than direct slaughter – was "the main cause of the catastrophic fall in the Indian population."[170] Nevertheless, Sánchez-Albornoz, Dunbar-Ortiz, and other critical scholars rightly insist that active colonial practices, applied consciously and deliberately, were a necessary condition for the destruction of Indigenous civilizations. The manifestations of that colonial project, according to Dunbar-Ortiz, included "overwork in the mines, massacres, starvation or malnutrition with the breakdown of subsistence food production, loss of will to live or reproduce, infanticide, suicide and abortion, and massive deportations as slave labour,"[171] all of which contributed to bodies weakened and unable to fight off diseases old and new. As Sánchez-Albornoz concludes, "the social and economic disturbance caused by European domination rendered the Indians even more susceptible to disease-carrying germs [and] the breakup of their cultural life deprived them of the vitality needed to preserve their ethnic identity."[172]

The creation of what would be called Honduras was one part of the genocidal story that began with the establishment of capitalist social relations and the modern state form in Europe. While much inter-oceanic travel had taken place prior to 1492, what

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[169] Anthony J. Hall reports, for instance, that British Major-General Jeffrey Amherst wrote to his superiors, in the mid-18th century, "could it not be contrived to send some small pox among the tribes of the Indians?" Amherst, quoted in Anthony J. Hall, *The Bowl With One Spoon: The American Empire and the Fourth World,* Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003, p. 332. Ward Churchill presents exhaustive evidence from the voices of colonizers themselves that disease was deliberately spread for the purpose of extermination and, while this evidence applies to North America and not directly to the region that is the focus of this study, it is certainly relevant in any discussion of the genocide in the Americas. Furthermore, given that germ warfare – as manifest in the weaponized delivery of plague-infected bodies to enemies – was present in Europe as early as the 14th century, Churchill's demonstration of a conscious effort to exterminate Indigenous people with disease in North America certainly raises the possibility that similar tactics might have been considered in Central America as well. Ward Churchill, *A Little Matter of Genocide: Holocaust and Denial in the Americas, 1492 to the Present*, San Francisco, City Lights Books, 1997.

[170] Sánchez-Albornoz, 65.

[171] Dunbar-Ortiz, 8.

[172] Sánchez-Albornoz, 65.

distinguished the European arrival was the emphasis it placed on the accumulation of precious metals, which was arguably a major piece of what Marx would describe as the "so-called primitive accumulation" that would become an important component of the establishment of the material basis for the expansion of global capitalism.[173] As Dunbar-Ortiz explains:

> Gold-fever was the ruling ideology of all colonizing ventures, at first in pursuit of the metal in its raw form, but then becoming more sophisticated, establishing whatever conditions were necessary to acquire as much gold as possible, that is, accumulation of wealth. While investors, monarchies and parliamentarians determined, controlled and understood the processes of accumulation and power, the ideology of gold-fever

[173] It is well beyond the scope of this project to offer a comprehensive account of the rise of capitalism, but it is certainly worth acknowledging that many scholars consider the vast plunder of riches from the "New World" to Europe to be a crucial foundation for world capitalism, insofar as it was this tremendous transfer of wealth that was seized upon by the emerging capitalist classes in Europe and turned towards the establishment of unequal relations – the separation and maintenance of a class of people who own the means of production and those who do not – that is so central to capitalism. As Marx notes, "the treasures captured outside Europe by undisguised looting, enslavement, and murder flowed back to the mother country and were turned into capital there." Karl Marx, *Capital, Vol I*, London, Penguin, 1990, p. 918. Jim Blaut has argued that "[the conquest] inaugurated a set of world historical processes that gave European protocapitalists enough capital and power to dissolve feudalism in their own region and begin the destruction of competing protocapitalist communities everywhere else." James M. Blaut, "Political Geography Debates No. 3: On the Significance of 1492." *Political Geography*, Vol. 11, Issue 4, July 1992, p. 355. Recent scholarship has called the position articulated by Blaut into question: Ellen Wood has insisted that the conquest of the Americas cannot be a causal factor in the emergence of capitalism since Spain, the dominant early colonial power, "amassed huge wealth from South American mines, and was well-endowed with 'capital' in the simple sense of wealth, [but it] did not develop in a capitalist direction," instead expending its massive colonial wealth "in essentially feudal pursuits." Ellen Wood, *The Origin of Capitalism: A Longer View*, New York, Verso, 2002, p. 148. McNally agrees that Spanish metal wealth was used not to develop capitalism but "to finance wars." David McNally, *Another World is Possible: Globalization and Anti-Capitalism*, Winnipeg, Arbeiter Ring, 2006, p. 144. Henry Heller concurs; though his explanation for the rise of capitalism diverges significantly from Wood's, he agrees that the conquest of America is not what created capitalism: "the power of colonial expansion," he insists, "depended on the growing strength of capitalism." Henry Heller, *The Birth of Capitalism: A Twenty-First Century Perspective*, Winnipeg, Fernwood, 2011, p. 168. Samir Amin, nevertheless, in his masterful work in *Eurocentrism,* accuses the entire tradition of western social science of downplaying the role of colonialism in establishing the unequal power relations that are maintained by capitalism: "the dominant currents of Western social thought stress the internal transformations of European society [in the establishment of capitalism] and are content to note that identical transformations were not realised elsewhere, placing the blame almost exclusively on factors internal to those non-European societies." Samir Amin, *Eurocentrism*, 2nd ed, New York, Monthly Review Press, 2009, p. 185. It is unclear precisely what role the colonization of the Americas – and, in particular, the early Spanish zeal for precious metals – played in the establishment of a world capitalist system. But it is clear that this tremendous transfer of wealth played *some* role; it was, arguably, a necessary condition for the rise of capitalism, though most certainly not a sufficient condition.

> was the bait that allowed them to mobilize the masses of settlers and soldiers. Subjugating entire societies and civilizations, enslaving whole countries, and slaughtering the entire population of village after village did not seem too high a price to pay, nor did it appear inhumane, in the logic of the prevailing ideology.[174]

Dunbar-Ortiz's presentation here should be understood as reflecting her own political moment and project as a member of the American Indian Movement in the 20th century; she opts to highlight the most scathing portrayal possible, in part, to counteract the weight of contemporary historical amnesia that lets the brutality of the conquest slip away in annual U.S. celebrations of Columbus Day. To be sure, her analysis needs to be complicated by the fact that many of the colonizing Spaniards were wary of killing too many Indigenous people, lest they should undermine their dwindling supply of slave labour. It should be added, furthermore, that a critique of Spanish conquest should not fall into the trap of the *Leyenda Negra* – the Black Legend – that Spanish colonialism was brutal and barbaric while the colonial projects of other European powers were relatively peaceful or benign. The notion that other colonizing forces were 'gentler,' propagated wherever possible by those other European powers, was and remains profoundly false. A focus on the Spanish, here, is a function only of their more direct relevance to the history of Honduras.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that Spanish *conquistadors'* greed for gold and silver *was* often matched by a terrifying savagery towards the people they encountered, who would often be forced into immediate slavery for the Spanish or, if they resisted enslavement, brutally slaughtered. Sánchez-Albornoz suggests that, "the Spaniards were possessed of a tradition of conquest," which they brought to bear with ferocity against what they knew was a much more numerous population that they had made their

[174] Dunbar-Ortiz, 10.

enemy.[175] The Spanish colonizers quickly established themselves in what is now Mexico and Panama, and moved into Central America largely from those flanks.[176] Indigenous people living in what became Honduras were seized and set to work either in gold and silver mines or sent on ships from the Bay of Honduras to the Spanish colonies in the Caribbean, especially Cuba, to work on sugar plantations, or even seized to be slaves in Spain itself.[177] Nonetheless, it is worth remembering that savagery alone could not account for such a systematic decimation of civilizations so large and complex; to draw once more from Dunbar-Ortiz:

> The key to such massive destruction is not the capacity for violence, nor is it technology, but rather, organization and administration. These were the elements that made colonization a vehicle of genocide. The prior development of capitalism and the state in Europe allowed for this new organizational capacity.[178]

Naturally, campaigns of such violence required a set of justifications. Much like imperial armies of today, which outfit their occupying forces with all manner of meaningless quasi-legal procedures to create the appearance of "due process" in foreign occupation,[179] Spanish conquistadors were furnished with a *requerimiento* – a statement of "requirement" for Christian conversion – which they were to read to so-called Indians before they attacked, captured, and enslaved them. The *requerimiento* was designed in 1513 and explained that the only way for Indigenous people to avoid this violent fate was to immediately submit to conversion and to the Christian god; as Honduran historian

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[175] Sánchez-Albornoz, 38.
[176] MacLeod, 49.
[177] MacLeod, 50-51.
[178] Dunbar-Ortiz, 11.
[179] Occupation forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, for instance, periodically read "rights" to detained prisoners, in an effort to legitimize their occupation. This process is satirized in the 1999 film *Three Kings,* in which American soldiers read Iraqi prisoners of war their 'rights' in English and punish them violently when they fail to comply with instructions that they cannot understand.

Longino Becerra notes, the *requerimiento* was established after Spanish brutality had already begun, and was set up only out of "the necessity of justifying the manner of their conduct."[180] Bartolomé de las Casas, a Spanish missionary famous for his critique of Spanish brutality in the Americas, considered the *requerimiento* an absurdity and described it as follows:

> [Indigenous people were] confronted with a demand that they convert on the spot, without their ever hearing the Word or having Christian doctrine explained to them; and should they show any reluctance to do so and to swear allegiance to a king they have never heard of nor clapped eyes on, and whose subjects and ambassadors prove to be cruel, pitiless and bloodthirsty tyrants, they should immediately surrender all their worldly goods and lose all rights to their land, their freedom, their womenfolk, their children and their lives. Such a notion is as absurd as it is stupid...[181]

Furthermore, Las Casas described a variety of occasions in which the *requerimiento* was read to Indigenous villages at night, quietly, from afar, in order to justify a murderous invasion the following morning.[182] Las Casas was present among the Spanish from the beginning of the conquest and spent much of his adult life critiquing the savagery and inhumanity of the *conquistadors;* his work was to occupy a central role in the *Leyenda Negra,* with complicated consequences. But Las Casas' position was, by no means, a rejection of colonization writ large. He began in 1502 as an *encomendero* himself, an overlord to several Indigenous servants 'gifted' to him by the Spanish crown, and even after he rejected the *encomienda* system (more on this below) he continued to believe that

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[180] Longino Becerra, *Evolucion Historica de Honduras*, Tegucigalpa, Baktun Editorial, 1983, p. 54-55. (Translated from Spanish. All translations by the author unless otherwise indicated.)
[181] Bartolomé de las Casas, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, New York, Penguin, 2004, p. 32-33.
[182] de las Casas, 33.

Indigenous people were in need of a less bloody brand of Christian guidance, spiritual awakening, and 'peaceful colonization,' describing the Americas as:

> Kingdoms granted and entrusted by God and His Church to the Spanish Crown so that [their Indigenous inhabitants] might be properly ruled and governed, converted to the Faith, and tenderly nurtured to full material and spiritual prosperity.[183]

His critique, then, was limited to the methods and manner of the conquest rather than the conquest itself, of which he was an active participant; Las Casas, in fact, founded a missionary settlement in the Verapaz region of contemporary Guatemala, which sought – unsuccessfully – to put his dream of a more just colonialism into action.[184] The insistence on a more 'peaceful' colonization is an argument that has echoes in much of contemporary Canadian policy, which seeks to extend Canadian power, wealth, and influence by a variety of seemingly 'peaceful' means, a point which I made in chapter 2 and to which I will return in chapter 6.[185]

THREE CENTURIES OF SPANISH RULE

Spanish conquest of Central America was more or less consolidated by the 1520s; the areas that came to be Honduras were among the least effectively occupied in the early stages of colonization, in part because Indigenous groups in Honduras were not united under one tributary society that could be demonstrably conquered – as was the case with Cortés' defeat of the Aztec – and, in part, because Spanish *conquistadors* focused their

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[183] de las Casas, 6.

[184] Anthony Pagden describes the failure of the Verapaz settlement in his introduction to Las Casas' *Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies.* Pagden, in Las Casas, p. xv.

[185] It is beyond the scope of this project to survey the vast literature that makes of what is now called the postcolonial tradition, but in this project I will insist – following that tradition – that 'peaceful colonization' must be understood as a contradiction in terms, since colonization is, by its nature, a violent process. A useful primer on postcolonial theory can be found in Robert Young's *Postcolonialism*, in which Las Cases is understood as one of the first European liberal anti-colonial theorists, whose legacy can – and has – been employed both to advocate projects of colonial assimilation and to justify anti-colonial struggle. Robert J.C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*, Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 2001, p. 75-77.

attention on places that seemed to offer more immediate wealth.[186] As such, Spanish rule in Honduras was focused at first on the capture and transport of slaves, an 'industry' that decimated communities, tore apart families, and produced incalculable violence, destruction, and heartbreak; untold numbers were killed resisting enslavement, or in the abysmally arduous sea voyages, or in the brutal conditions at their destinations.[187] By mid-century, the numbers of Indigenous people in Honduras had been catastrophically reduced and the prospects for further enslavement were dim;[188] as Spanish conquerors began to establish themselves they wanted to use the remaining Indigenous labour themselves, in Honduras, especially as it became apparent that gold and silver could be found there.

So, as Spanish control tightened, the conquering authorities set to work establishing more permanent dominion over the people whose labour they would need to extract wealth from the earth, in the fields, the mines, and the ranches.[189] Three primary strategies were used to obtain Indigenous labour during the period of Spanish rule: the *encomienda,* the *repartimiento,* and 'free' capitalist wage labour. In the former, Indigenous people were 'granted' to one or another Spanish colonizer, as noted above, and they functioned as servants to the individual *encomendero* who had 'received' them. In 1549, the Spanish Crown banned almost all *encomiendas* (exceptions were made for government officials and clergy) in the hopes of creating a free labour market, through

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[186] MacLeod, 41-45.
[187] MacLeod, 50-55.
[188] MacLeod, 55.
[189] I have chosen, here, to skip over much of the narrative describing the wrangling between various Spanish conquistadors for control over this part of Central America. Much detail on this can be found in Robert S. Chamberlain's *The Conquest and Colonization of Honduras*, a largely celebratory study of Columbus, Cortés, Alvarado and the other conquerors; Cortés' violent march from Mexico to Honduras, for instance, is described as "one of the most spectacular of his many great deeds." Chamberlain, 16. A more critical but less detailed account can be found in Murdo MacLeod's *Spanish Central America.*

which all Spanish colonists would be able to exploit Indigenous labour. But this presented a problem, as Linda Newson explains:

> The Crown intended that the abolition of [the *encomienda*] should open the way for the establishment of a free labour market to which both *encomenderos* and non-*encomenderos* would have access. Nevertheless, it was fearful that, if the Indians were given the freedom to work, they would refuse. As such, a system of forced labour known as the *repartimiento* was introduced.[190]

Under the *repartimiento*, Indigenous villages would be expected to give a certain quantity of tribute and labour to various enterprises at fixed wages under the supervision of one or another Spanish colonist; Indigenous communities themselves would determine who would be sent, and representatives of the Crown would allocate them to particular projects for predetermined lengths of time.[191] These conscripted labourers would be kept in a constant rotation so that Spanish colonists could count on a regular supply of labour, and while employers of *repartimiento* workers were supposed to be responsible for providing food and decent treatment to their workers, overwork, malnourishment, and injury were regular parts of the work experience, and even the fixed wages set by the Crown were regularly ignored.[192]

This super-exploitative semi-feudal arrangement amounted to slavery by another name, and it was to be a fixture of the colonial relationship throughout the three centuries

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[190] Newson, 178. This should, again, call to mind the important passages in Volume I of Marx's *Capital* on "so-called primitive accumulation," in which Marx describes the absolute refusal of many peasant farmers in England during the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries to submit themselves to wage labour and market-dependence. In these stirring passages, Marx describes the process by which capitalist property relations were forced upon people "under circumstances of ruthless terrorism," and describes the "bloody legislation" that was enacted to impose violent punishment on dispossessed peasants who refused to enter into wage labour. Karl Marx, *Capital, Vol I*, London, Penguin, 1990, p. 873-904. This is further taken up and elaborated in David McNally's *Another World is Possible*, in which he demonstrates that people faced with any alternative to capitalist wage labour have overwhelmingly pursued those alternatives, even when they have imposed all manner of hardship and difficulty. David McNally, *Another World Is Possible*, Winnipeg, Arbeiter Ring, 2006, p. 90-91.

[191] Newson, 8-10.

[192] Newson, 183.

of Spanish dominion, especially in mining and agriculture. Nevertheless, the *repartimiento* would be gradually replaced by capitalist forms of free labour, whereby Spanish landowners would hire Indigenous workers outside of the *repartimiento* at slightly higher wages and with large advances for housing and food, in an effort to draw Indigenous people into a form of debt-slavery;[193] given the shock, dislocation, and disarray that Spanish conquest had beset upon Indigenous people and their own political and economic structures, the prospects for survival outside of the newly imposed Spanish infrastructure were increasingly bleak. As a result, Spanish colonists hoped they would find a relatively steady supply of Indigenous labourers prepared to enter into profoundly unfair waged labour relations – which would be better described as debt peonage – in which the Indigenous workers would be expected to work in order to pay back the debt that they incurred when they accepted their employers' advances.[194] These 'free' labour arrangements began as early as the late 1500s, but they failed to attract many Indigenous workers. Following the historical pattern of most impositions of capitalist social relations, people chose almost any option over entering into the wage relationship, and even as the *repartimiento* system faltered and Spanish employers offered higher wages to draw people in, they still complained of their inability to find willing Indigenous workers.[195]

Nonetheless, with their own societies crumbling under the weight of the genocidal Spanish conquest, by the late 1700s Indigenous people could find fewer and fewer alternatives to selling their labour save letting themselves perish – which they sometimes

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[193] Newson, 188. This practice was technically made illegal in 1584, but the Crown was either unable or unwilling to crack down on the practice, especially at first when it was applied to a relatively small portion of the total Indigenous labour force.
[194] Newson, 187-188.
[195] Newson, 188.

did choose over working for the Spanish.[196] Those who survived were increasingly shifted away from the *repartimiento* system, which went into relative decline as dynamics in Spain led to a diminished capacity to govern its own empire. By the dawn of the 19th century, exploitative capitalist wage labour had eclipsed the *repartimiento* as the dominant system of extracting Indigenous labour.[197] Prior to the Spanish invasion, Indigenous peoples had relied upon complex social-agricultural systems for their survival; people grew corn, beans, squash, and other staple crops on land consigned by a local leader, a *cacique,* who took some tribute but left most of the yield in the hands of the direct producers.[198] But Spanish colonization had forced Indigenous people – either by direct coercion or by the de-population of their communities and subsequent impossibility of survival by traditional means – to offer their labour to the new Spanish occupiers, who dramatically re-oriented the economy, over three centuries, away from subsistence production towards the production of exports in order to bring wealth to themselves and the Spanish crown.[199]

Naturally, this imposition was not accepted without resistance. As early as 1515, Central American Indigenous people, enslaved and sent to work in the Caribbean, were considered 'unsatisfactory workers' in large part due to their refusal to accept enslavement; one group of slaves seized a ship in Cuba and sailed it back to their home on the Bay Islands.[200] On the mainland, resistance first mounted in the west, where in the 1530s it was coordinated by an Indigenous leader named Cocumba; pitched battles were

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[196] Dunbar-Ortiz, 8.
[197] Newson, 189.
[198] John A. Booth, Christine J. Wade and Thomas W. Walker, *Understanding Central America: Global Forces, Rebellion, and Change, 5th ed,* Boulder, Westview Press, 2010, p. 48.
[199] Booth, Wade and Walker, 48.
[200] MacLeod, 50.

fought in the Ulúa Valley, ending in brutal massacre at the hands of the Spaniards led by Pedro de Alvarado.[201] The resentment sown by Alvarado blew up again between 1537-39, when a Lenca leader called Lempira – whose name is now given to the Honduran currency – raised an army 30,000 strong, refused the *repartimiento*, and made a dramatic stand at the Peñol de Cerquín.[202] This inspired Indigenous revolts across the province, centred around Comayagua and San Pedro, on such a scale that the Spanish administration had to send for help from neighbouring colonial centres. One account of Lempira's uprising cites him claiming to be invincible and calling upon all Indigenous people to drive the Spaniards out, declaring it to be "shameful, that so many valiant men should be held in bondage by so few."[203] It is unclear how seriously this account should be taken, written, as it was, by an admirer of the Spanish occupation, Robert S. Chamberlain, but it is certainly clear that Lempira inspired confidence in his followers and led the largest rebellion against the Spanish conquerors in the history of the conquest of Central America.

When even a siege of Lempira's Cerquín stronghold could not defeat the uprising, the Spanish turned to trickery in order to kill Lempira and dishearten the rebellion. Lempira was lured into false peace negotiations and then shot by a hidden gunman. Chamberlain describes the events, emphasizing Lempira's arrogance and his followers' fanaticism in typical Orientalist fashion,[204] as follows:

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[201] Newson, 96-97.
[202] Julio César Pinto Soria, in Edelberto Torres Rivas, ed, *Historia General de Centroamérica, Tomo 2*, Madrid, Sociedad Estatal Quinto Centerario, 1993, p. 64-65.
[203] Lempira, quoted in Chamberlain, 80.
[204] Edward Said's *Orientalism* does well to demonstrate a consistent pattern in Eurocentric writing and scholarship on 'the Orient,' the logic of which can be applied to anywhere outside of the European tradition, which attributes a variety of 'backwards' characteristics to non-Europeans and emphasizes the rationality and progressiveness of European civilization. A great deal of the English-language writing on Honduras fits well into this category. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, New York, Vintage Books, 1978.

> In the spring of 1538 Cáceres finally decided to eliminate Lempira, the heart and soul of resistance, by fair means or foul. Cáceres knew that not only Lempira but also his followers fanatically regarded him as invincible, a conviction that offered the Spanish captain a way to his own ends. He therefore plotted to invite Lempira to a parley and there assassinate him. [...] With perfect faith in his destiny, Lempira accepted Cáceres' invitation. He approached the Spanish lines at the appointed hour, resplendent in a plumed helmet, rich cotton armour, and insignia befitting his rank. [...] While the parley was progressing and Lempira was delivering haughty defiance, the arquebusier took careful aim, fired, and killed the great Indian lord with a ball through his forehead. The sudden and unworthy death of their inspired leader, whom they had thought unconquerable and impervious to enemy arms, caused instant and utter panic among the defenders of [Cerquín].[205]

Chamberlain's account implicitly justifies the European colonial project, highlighting the Indians' supposed fanaticism and irrationality – and their leader's arrogance – and lauding the Spaniards use of trickery and intellect to undermine the rebellion. The implication is that the Spaniards were modern and rational and, while Lempira's rebels may not have liked handing over their sovereignty, it was ultimately in their best interest since the Spanish represented the forward march of civilization.[206]

It is clear from their continued resistance that Indigenous civilizations in Honduras did not agree with Chamberlain's assessment.[207] But what Chamberlain did

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[205] Chamberlain, 89.
[206] Chamberlain, 69-99.
[207] Naturally, Chamberlain is just one example of the standard European framing of Indigenous people. J.L. Stephens was an American archaeologist who travelled in Central America in the 1840s and whose descriptions of the sites of abandoned Mayan cities are still popular (and are featured in the ROM exhibit described above); he brags about the fact that he 'bought' the ruins at Copan for fifty dollars and has the following to say about Indigenous people in 1843: "the North American Indian is by drinking made insolent, ferocious and brutal, and with a knife in his hand he is always a dangerous creature; but the Indians of Yucatan when intoxicated are only more docile and submissive. All wear machetes, but they never use them to do harm." J.L. Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Yucatan,* New York, Dover Publications, 1963, p. 203. These types of descriptions were typical of the colonial and postcolonial era and remain popular among settlers and their descendents today serving, as they do, the purpose of justifying the colonial project itself. A useful collection of some of these racist assertions can be found in Berkhofer's *The White Man's Indian,* though I do not fully accept the conclusions he draws from his survey. Robert F. Berkhofer Jr., *The White Man's Indian*, New York, Vintage Books, 1978.

get right was that after the fall of Lempira and the 1537 rebellion, few uprisings would achieve significant success against the increasingly firmly planted Spanish colonial apparatus. Especially in the west, rebellions were quickly and violently repressed by colonial forces, and it was only in the eastern provinces, where Spanish settlement took place more gradually, that resistance could be sustained. Between 1542-1546, for instance, there were a number of loosely connected uprisings in Olancho and Gracias a Dios, many of which united both Indigenous and recently-imported African slaves against the Spanish;[208] they were defeated by colonial armies, but similar uprisings continued with limited success throughout the period of Spanish rule, especially under the *encomiendas* and *repartimientos*.[209]

While the Spanish rulers of Honduras used violence and terror to maintain their dominion over Indigenous peoples, they quarrelled amongst themselves over the various territories of their American Empire – which would be gradually taken over by the increasingly powerful Great Britain. Having never intended Honduras to be a genuine settler colony, the Spanish made little attempt to advance local capitalist development or industry; instead, they used various forms of slavery to extract natural resources – especially precious metals – from the earth to be shipped for sale in European markets. Honduran urban development, then, was to be shaped by the boom and bust cycles of particular non-renewable exports; rapid development around the village of Gracias was halted when the gold ran out. Tegucigalpa initially expanded as a base for silver mining, but as the silver became difficult to extract, the city fell into stagnation.[210] Spanish attempts to impose production of other exports, from balsam to sarsaparilla to cacao, all

[208] Chamberlain, 220-226.
[209] Newson, 116.
[210] MacLeod, 148.

proved ineffectual and unsuccessful. These dynamics were similar in most of the Central American countries (with the exception of Costa Rica) and, as historians John Booth, Christine Wade, and Thomas Walker argue, "it is small wonder that the four republics of northern Central America are typified to this day by wide social and economic disparities generated by centuries of control by socially-irresponsible economic elites."[211]

SOVEREIGNTY WITHOUT INDEPENDENCE

By the middle of the eighteenth century, Honduras was sparsely populated, either by Spanish colonists, who could find few easy sources of wealth, or by Indigenous people whose populations had been in steady decline since the initial conquest. The country was politically weak and fragmented between greedy Spanish overseers who fought over regional fiefdoms at the cost of centralized power. The colonists had destroyed much of the social and economic structure that preceded Spanish conquest but had failed to replace it with any effective local capitalist development.[212] And the expansion of the political, military, and economic power of other European states meant that the Spanish Empire was in decline, being gradually parcelled out to more powerful competitors, especially Great Britain. Little Spanish attention, then, was paid to Honduras, which was left to rot in the sloughs of the under-development that had been imposed upon it.

As Britain gradually increased its colonial influence in the Caribbean and Central America, the Spanish could mount only feeble resistance. The British raided and sometimes seized Spanish colonies – Trujillo in 1643, Jamaica in 1655, Havana in 1762 – and began establishing their own presence on the mainland. That presence was manifest in the creation of British Honduras (now Belize) and the Protectorate of Miskitu, both of

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[211] Booth, Wade and Walker, 50.
[212] Alison Acker, *Honduras: The Making of a Banana Republic*, Toronto, Between the Lines, 1988, p. 32-35.

which were carved out of what were to become Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua in order to protect British interests in mining and timber,[213] and from which they launched or encouraged attacks on the Spanish colonies in Central America.[214] With Spanish power in decline, its Honduran territories were increasingly vulnerable; at various points in the 18th century, the British seized and controlled different sections of Honduras, from Roatán Island to San Pedro Sula. As Honduran historian Rafael Heliodoro Valle describes it, "if any country in America were to demonstrate the bad policies of Spain...it would be Honduras,"[215] though one could hardly make a case that Spanish policy in the other Central American colonies was much better.

When independence from Spain finally arrived, it was under the auspices of moderate liberal reformers from the *criollo* elite (of Spanish ancestry but born in Central America) who were looking to imitate the American Revolution and separate themselves from the Spanish Crown while leaving the fundamental class structure intact. Edelberto Torres Rivas explains:

> The struggles for independence [...] were always isolated outbreaks by an intellectual elite who could not succeed in articulating a long-term popular insurrection. The absence of the masses in the Central American independence struggles

[213] Booth, Wade and Walker, 53-54.

[214] The process of British interference in the politics of Central America and the Caribbean typically followed the pattern described in C.L.R. James' history of the Haitian Revolution, *The Black Jacobins*. The dynamics are masterfully recreated in Gillo Pontecorvo's brilliant 1969 film, *Burn!*, which is inspired by James' book but takes place on a fictitious island nation, in which a British adventurer (played by Marlon Brando) in the employ of the trading companies encourages and supports local resistance to Spanish colonialism, while simultaneously cooperating with outgoing Spanish officials and local compradors in securing their elite positions in the postcolonial arrangement – the purpose being to play both sides against one another and secure British economic mastery over whomever should come out on top. Brando's character could easily be based on Frederick Chatfield, British agent in Central America from 1834-52.

[215] Rafael Heliodoro Valle, *Historia de la Cultura Hondureña*, Tegucigalpa, Ediciones Universitarias, 1981, p. 123.

> contrasted with victories achieved in other Spanish dominions, especially Mexico.[216]

As movements for independence were growing in strength, these landed elites were particularly conscious of the fact that revolutionary movements, in Mexico and especially in Haiti, had sought and perhaps succeeded in effecting a radical break from the old hierarchies and recognized the receptiveness with which those revolutions might be received by the *ladino* (people of mixed Spanish and Indigenous ancestry), African, and Indigenous labouring classes of Central America. As Héctor Pérez Brignoli explains:

> This was a case of a general terror, which occupied the dominant classes in Central America, at the possibility that popular movements for independence would reach the same degree of radicalism as in Mexico or Haiti.[217]

With the Spanish Empire crumbling and the newly independent Mexico threatening to annex all of Central America, the landed elite in the Central American provinces organized a tenuous union to declare their own independence from both Spain and Mexico, writing the region's first constitution in 1824. This was a document modelled after those in Mexico and the United States though, notably, the United Provinces of Central American banned the practice of direct slavery, some 19 years prior to Great Britain and 41 years before the United States.[218]

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[216] Edelberto Torres Rivas, *History and Society in Central America*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1993, p. 1.

[217] Héctor Pérez Brignoli, in Edelberto Torres Rivas, ed, *Historia General de Centroamérica, Tomo 3*, Madrid, Sociedad Estatal Quinto Centerario, 1993, p. 84.

[218] In Central America, slavery would re-emerge only briefly in 1855 in Nicaragua under the dictatorship of U.S. adventurer William Walker, who also made English the official language, despite there only being a tiny minority in the country who spoke it. In 1857 he was toppled by an alliance of the Central American states and fled with American protection, but when he returned to try to orchestrate another takeover in 1860 he was captured by Honduran authorities and executed. See Booth, Wade and Walker, p. 54. Dating the abolition of slavery in Great Britain and the United States is necessarily imprecise, since it was a gradual and complicated process; for the purposes of this project, I'm using the Slavery Act of 1843 in Britain and the 13th Amendment in the United States as the key moments.

While the ruling classes in Central America squabbled amongst themselves over how power should be divided in their new Union, they actively discouraged any popular mobilization, lest it lead to demands for more radical change. As journalist Alison Acker notes, the governor of Honduras "prohibited the ringing of bells to celebrate Central American independence, in case it should generate mass enthusiasm."[219] Nonetheless, it was a Honduran – a privileged *criollo* from Tegucigalpa named Francisco Morazán – who would lead an army to Guatemala City to consolidate the union of Central American states in 1827. Though canonized in official Honduran histories as a hero of liberty and democracy, Morazán's project looked not too dissimilar from that of Símon Bolívar in South America – a union of liberal capitalist republics modelled after those in Europe that would carry on business-as-usual from a position of political equality with the European states from whence, according to this narrative, they came.

But Morazán's vision could hardly be called democratic; when peasants and priests refused to submit to a poorly coordinated cholera quarantine in 1837, he marched in with the military[220] – one of 21 such military ventures in his 11 years of unelected 'presidency.' Nor could it be meaningfully described as promoting liberty; the Indigenous people conscripted to build 'more humane' prisons could hardly be blamed for questioning this version of 'freedom.'[221] Indeed, it was a *ladino* leader with roots in Indigenous communities in Guatemala – José Rafael Carrera – who eventually defeated Morazán in 1838 on the strength of a major mobilization of popular support; support that Morazán could rarely call upon. In fact, while Morazán more or less had the backing of Great Britain and the United States, Carrera's supporters were, at least in the beginning,

[219] Acker, 40.
[220] Woodward, 104.
[221] Woodward, 103.

primarily drawn from Central America's Indigenous and *ladino* communities, most of them peasants.

In a noteworthy comparison, well-known U.S. archaeologist J.L. Stephens, who travelled in Central America in the 1840s, called Morazán "the best man in Central America" while describing Carrera as "ignorant, fanatic, sanguinary and the slave to violent passions, wielding absolutely the physical force of the country and that force entertaining a natural hatred of the whites,"[222] a description reminiscent of Chamberlain's writings on Cáceres and Lempira. Carrera ultimately amounted to a fairly typical *caudillo* of the day, but the reaction against him from the foreign elite – based largely on his race and his invocation of resistance to the racialized hierarchies of power that Morazán perpetuated – is suggestive of the extent to which Carrera was viewed as a much more serious threat to the established colonial and postcolonial order and points to the serious limitations of Morazán's United Central America.[223] This is well described by E. Bradford Burns, who describes the rise of Carrera:

> The many grievances of the Indians reached a climax in 1837 with the outbreak of a violent cholera epidemic, the final proof to the Indians that the government sought to eliminate them in order to give their lands to immigrants. At that point a popular revolt broke out... among the many things that popular rebellion signified, it voiced the refusal of the Indians to countenance any further exploitation and destruction through Europeanization... Carrera appreciated the Indians opposition to the process of Europeanization imposed by the liberals. He regarded it as his

[222] J.L. Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chaipas and Yucatan*, New York, Dover, 1841, p. 212.

[223] This, of course, did not stop European agents from playing all sides of Central American conflicts against one another, even when they had a preferred victor in mind. British agent Frederick Chatfield actually supplied arms to the Conservatives in Guatemala, who had sided with Carrera against Morazán, as he had become concerned about the prospect of a united Central America able to stand up to British interference. See Mario Rodríguez, *A Palmerstonian Diplomat in Central America: Frederick Chatfield, Esq.*, Tucson, University of Arizona Press, 1964.

> principal duty to allow "the people to return to their customs, their habits, and their particular manner of living."[224]

Carrera's success, then, was in his very refusal to participate in the liberal project that was at the heart of Morazán's enterprise.

It is unhelpful, then, to imagine that the Morazán era was idyllic for the majority of the people who were now considered independent Hondurans. Nonetheless, the failure of a United Central America under the Honduran-born Morazán left the country in an even more precarious position vis-à-vis the rapacious new colonizers from Britain and the U.S., whose gaze had fallen on Honduras as a possible site for a trans-isthmus canal. After Carrera's victory over Morazán, the Central American republics were once again independent, though Carrera was sure to install *caudillos* in each country that would be agreeable to his rule in Guatemala. Meanwhile, as the British flexed their muscles – demanding the return of African slaves escaped from Belize, for instance – weak Honduran governments routinely capitulated, knowing that they relied on the British whose banks owned their debt, whose capitalists owned their mines, and whose ships now monopolized most of the trade on the Caribbean Sea.[225] Infamous British agent Frederick Chatfield – who had secretly undermined Morazán's attempts to build a united Central America – continued to plot against the independent Central American states and play them against one another in order to maintain British influence. Among these intrigues was support for Costa Rica's disputed claim to the Nicaraguan city of San Juan; fomenting of war between Guatemala and Honduras in 1850 by supporting a rebellion against President Juan Lindo; and undermining of the 1851 Pact of Leon between

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[224] E. Bradford Burns, *The Poverty of Progress: Latin American in the Nineteenth Century*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1980, p. 97-98.
[225] Becerra, 116-120.

Honduras and El Salvador, designed to re-ignite the idea of Central American unity.[226] As Booth, Wade, and Walker describe it, "foreign intervention exacerbated the Central American nations' well-established penchant for interfering in each others' internal affairs and led to international disputes within the region and overt and covert military and political intervention by outside powers."[227]

Indeed, alongside the de-stabilizing meddling, U.S. and British statesmen scrambled across Central America in the 1840s and 50s, staking claims to strategic points on the coasts in order to position themselves favourably for any railroad or canal that would be built, often invoking the threat of armed conflict for interference in their sovereign territories, despite the fact that the territories in question belonged to Honduras, Nicaragua and, later, Colombia.[228] After British troops under Chatfield invaded the Honduran port of Trujillo and Tigre Island, as mentioned above, it was the United States, invoking the Monroe Doctrine, that forced them out; Honduran President Juan Lindo – harried by Chatfield's interference - promptly invited the U.S. to remain on Tigre Island for 18 months to protect it against British interference, marking the first of many long- and short-term U.S. occupations of Honduran territory.[229] This point signalled a key shift in the colonial order in Central America; the Spanish were gone and the British were now being supplanted by the United States.[230]

As the British faded from the scene, competing U.S. investors looked to establish possession of the means of transporting goods across the isthmus; Cornelius Vanderbilt

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[226] Rodríguez, 319.
[227] Booth, Wade and Walker, 54.
[228] Becerra, 111-112.
[229] Booth, Wade and Walker, 54.
[230] Robert Freeman Smith, in Leslie Bethell, ed., *The Cambridge History of Latin America, Vol 4*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986, p. 84-87.

and William Walker struggled over who should own the concession to build a railroad across Nicaragua, with Vanderbilt winning out, after the four Central American nations united briefly to defeat Walker when he invaded and appointed himself President.[231] Eduardo Galeano describes it with characteristic clarity:

> Walker robbed, killed, burned and in successive expeditions proclaimed himself president of Nicaragua, El Salvador and Honduras. He restored slavery in areas that suffered his devastating occupation, thus continuing his country's philanthropic work in the states that had just been seized from Mexico. He was welcomed back to the United States as a national hero.[232]

Another American, Ephraim George Squier, signed a charter with Honduran President José Trinidad Cabañas in 1853 to build a railroad across Honduran territory, using cost-free – forced – Honduran convict labour.[233] The charter gave Squier one thousand square miles of Honduran land at no cost and guaranteed rights to U.S. citizens to travel in Honduras without a passport and to work in Honduras without paying taxes – a condition that has reflections in contemporary economic policy. As Becerra describes, "the document was signed... with onerous conditions placed on Honduras, but nevertheless, North American bankers lost interest in the project."[234] The railroad failed to find outside financiers and came to nothing, but these events indicated the extent to which Honduran governments were willing to prostrate themselves to the needs of foreign capital.

COLONIALISM TO NEOCOLONIALISM

The railroad debacle – the first of many – was to set the tone for the century of North American interference that was to follow; direct colonization was a thing of the

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[231] Woodward, 136-146.
[232] Eduardo Galeano, *Open Veins of Latin America*, New York, Monthly Review Press, 1997, p. 107.
[233] Acker, 53.
[234] Becerra, p. 118.

past but distinct forms of neo-colonialism were taking shape and would profoundly affect all aspects of Honduran life, as they still do today. After the failure of Central American unity, Honduras sunk into political chaos as successive governments were pushed and pulled by the whims of British and American foreign policy, which routinely collaborated with various factions of the weak and divided Honduran ruling class in its internecine conflicts, such that from 1824 to 1900 the country went through no less than 98 changes of government, each lasting, on average, less than one year.[235] Most of these governments were established in military coups, as one *caudillo* after another gained the support of the foreigners, looted the treasury, and tried his hand at ruling the country.

Some historians describe the period as one of 'civil war,' but it would be a mistake to imagine that there were two distinct camps fighting for power; rather, the Honduran ruling classes were swept up in a series of loosely connected conflicts that often spilled across national borders and were driven by the changing fortunes of individual *caudillos* and their personal armies.[236] These militias were sometimes armed or otherwise supported by the British or Americans, and they tore up and down Central America for decades, leaving much destruction – but little development – in their wake. Even more than in neighbouring countries, the period of chaos and conflict left traditional Honduran social structures devastated, left its fledgling capitalist development utterly disarticulated, and left very little by way of a political apparatus that could stand up to

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[235] Robert H. Holden, *Armies Without Nations: Public Violence and State Formation in Central America, 1821-1960*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004, 68.

[236] Robert Holden's impressive work *Armies Without Nations* details the chaos that typified this period in Honduras, noting both the lack of consistent and effective centralized political power and the absence of any similarly centralized military forces. Instead, *caudillo* after *caudillo* would rise to power by way of their personal armies, declare that the era of the *caudillo* must end, and then be overthrown by another *caudillo*. Holden, 68-75. Torres Rivas complicates that picture by arguing that if there were two 'poles' in the civil wars of post-union Central America they could be described as anarchy and dictatorship. Torres Rivas, 3.

foreign interference. As William I. Robinson has described it, "the chaotic disequilibria among internal social forces for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries led to the extreme instability and precariousness of the Honduran state and polity."[237] Furthermore, that very disarticulation only encouraged more aggressive competition for state power, as Robinson continues:

> Given the limited possibilities for enrichment through economic activity, the upper classes gravitated towards politics and engaged in ferocious struggles for power and the spoils of office. Government by *caudillo* became an institutional fixture of the political system from independence until the rise of the military to power in 1956.[238]

Not surprisingly, the cycle of internal weakness and external interference reinforced itself. Robinson, comparing Honduras to its neighbours in Central America, again describes it well: "the weakness of Honduran social forces and the state allowed for the vulgar domination of the country by foreign companies, making Honduras the quintessential 'Banana Republic.'"[239] Undaunted by the first failure to build a trans-isthmus railroad, for instance, the 'modernizing' liberal government of Marco Aurelio Soto – enamoured as it was with the spirit of enterprise and the dream of a modern, capitalist, Honduras – borrowed nearly 6 million pounds from British money-lenders between 1867-70 to try again. The project – and it's only completed bridge – promptly collapsed in 1872 with only fifty miles of track laid. It was a swindle and, without the means to pay off the debt, successive Honduran governments left it to collect interest, so that by the 1920s Honduras' external debt had grown to over 30 million pounds, leaving

[237] William I. Robinson, *Transnational Conflicts: Central America, Social Change and Globalization*, London, Verso, 2003, p. 119.
[238] Robinson, 119.
[239] Robinson, 119.

the country at the mercy of international capital.[240] This serves as a striking illustration of how quickly and easily foreign and local ruling classes could team up to punish ordinary Hondurans, then as now, and it represented an important turning point as it marked the first great push by Honduran leaders to attract foreign investment. No government prior to Soto's had been so keen to dole out its own territory for foreign capital.[241]

And this was but the beginning. In 1880, President Soto joined with financiers from New York to form the Rosario Mining company, which within twenty years would come to dominate the Honduran gold and silver mines, originally dispersed by the state as concessions to some 276 mostly foreign companies.[242] Rosario, which ultimately controlled 87% of Honduran mining, was completely exempt from Honduran taxes and paid next-to-nothing in wages to its local workers. After a series of calamitous accidents at Rosario mines near San Juancito in 1909, workers went on strike for better pay and protection; police and military were brought in by President Dávila to attack the strikers, quickly ending the standoff.[243] The company continued to extract wealth from the ground and from the people and made riches for its foreign owners, along with a handful of Honduran oligarchs and a scattering of Arab, French and German businessmen who gradually formed a small merchant class, but when the market for silver dropped off around the turn of the century, the mines were closed and the money taken elsewhere.[244]

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[240] Bulmer-Thomas, in Bethell, 192.
[241] Booth, Wade and Walker, 160-161.
[242] Morris, 4.
[243] Becerra, 151.
[244] Bulmer-Thomas, in Bethell, 192.

Over as quickly as it had begun, the mini-boom in mining left, as Alison Acker describes, little more than "unemployment, ravaged hillsides and an empty national treasury."[245]

As economist Victor Bulmer-Thomas notes, "Tegucigalpa was the only capital city in Central America not served by a railway," and against this dismal backdrop it is not hard to understand the enthusiasm with which the liberal elite greeted the banana companies, which arrived next.[246] The banana plantations were major growing operations – undertaken along Honduras' north coast – that required thousands of workers, major modifications to the topography, and the capacity and infrastructure to transport the fruit to a consumer market quickly. Few Hondurans could pony up the capital to undertake these projects, so the banana plantations, too, were almost exclusively foreign-owned, with the infamous United Fruit Company leading the way. The plantations were sites of extreme exploitation; companies whose annual profits were in the millions paid workers as little as $24 a month. In the typical pattern of capitalist entrenchment, the wages initially seemed like riches to peasants who had hitherto lived off the land, used paper money rarely, and engaged in the market only for non-essential goods.[247]

However, as peasants migrated to the north coast to work on the plantations, they quickly discovered that their wages would not go far; dislocated from their communities

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[245] Acker, 59.
[246] Bulmer-Thomas, in Bethell, 192-193.
[247] To borrow Ellen Wood's framework from *The Origin of Capitalism*, this use of the market could be described as the market as 'opportunity,' since people did not rely on the market for survival, they freely chose to engage in it only when they had something to trade or wanted a particular non-essential good or service. This is to be distinguished from the market imperatives that would become entrenched once peasants were denied their access to land and became dependant on the market for their survival, which forced them to accept wage labour and to accept whatever wages they could get from owners of capital. In the Honduran context, then, the fruit companies represented an acceleration of the emerging dynamic of proletarianization, which recorded its first tremors in the move away from *repartimiento* labour in the early 19th century. See Ellen Meiksins Wood, *The Origin of Capitalism*, London, Verso, 2002.

and social supports, most workers quickly spent their way into debt, on drinking and gambling but especially on the expensive goods at the company stores which were needed to supplement the measly provisions they were given. English was the language of authority and the seat of Honduran government in Tegucigalpa seemed a world away from the real power vested in the banana companies.[248] Between overcrowded, unsanitary living conditions and hard days of supervised – and therefore ceaseless – physical labour, it is easy to see why workers quickly came to view the plantation, as per Ramón Amaya Amador's description, as a *prisión verde* (green prison), especially since the debts they were drawn into were owed to the company and made them dependant on their wages in order to pay back their debts; an echo of the 'free' labour market under Spanish rule. Workers typically lasted an average of just twelve years before their bodies succumbed and they ceased to be useful to the banana empires (more on this below).[249]

Meanwhile, as the new export-industry grew in the 1890s, Honduran governments tried to learn from the mistakes they had made with earlier foreign concessions and moved to enact laws that would bring some of the banana profits back to the Honduran treasury and improve the prospects for local growers. A tax levied in 1893 sought to impose two cents on every banana stem exported, and laws passed in 1897 would structure foreign land purchases in such a way as to discourage the consolidation of major estates.[250] But the mostly American banana growers were not prepared to allow any of their profits to be diverted. The 1897 laws to prevent consolidation were easily sidestepped by a combination of legal trickery and naked force, which was especially

[248] For more on the unique development of Honduras' North Coast, see Dario A. Euraque, *Reinterpreting the Banana Republic*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1996.
[249] Roger Burbagh and Patricia Flynn, *Agribusiness in the Americas*, New York, Monthly Review Press, 1980, p. 159.
[250] Becerra, 147.

easy when it was small farmers the companies were up against. As for the tax on banana stems, it would be repealed after a 1911 U.S.-led coup installed Manuel Bonilla – in the employ of the Cuyamel Fruit Company – as President.

Indeed, as the banana empires grew, conflict between the American companies was routinely played out through political violence in Central America. The three companies that would emerge atop the heap were the Standard Fruit, Cuyamel, and United Fruit Companies. Standard Fruit arrived in 1902 and came to own companies in dozens of different industries, including banking; they owned the bank that became Banco Atlantido (today controlled by Chase Manhattan), one of Honduras' largest banks.[251] Sam Zemurray's Cuyamel Company got started in 1905 but didn't really take off until after he orchestrated a coup d'etat in 1911; having plotted with former *caudillo* President Manuel Bonilla in New Orleans, the pair sailed for Trujillo with an army of mercenaries in January 1911. Zemurray's army had the support of the U.S. State Department and, by March, President Dávila had been overthrown, to be replaced by Manuel Bonilla, and Cuyamel Company finally received the land and railroad concessions it had previously been denied.[252] This was but one of the many military interventions and occupations that the United States would effect in Honduras during this period; in a now infamous confession in 1935, US General Smedley D. Butler acknowledged that his work in the US Marine Corps had amounted to being "a racketeer for capitalism" and that he and his troops had "helped make Honduras 'right' for American fruit companies in 1903."[253]

[251] Bulmer-Thomas, in Bethell, 193.
[252] Bulmer-Thomas, in Bethell, 194.
[253] Smedley D. Butler, quoted in Galeano, 108.

The third and most important banana empire was that of the infamous United Fruit Company, implicated in repressive, anti-democratic, and counter-revolutionary activity throughout the region (not least the coup d'etat that overthrow the democratic government of Guatemala in 1954.)[254] Despite Cuyamel's victory in gaining the Honduran presidency in 1911, United Fruit was always the larger company – it had a wider range of operations, deeper pockets, and more fixed relationships in Washington. The two companies squared off on a number of occasions in the 1910s and 20s, usually with each company backing a rival *caudillo* in a struggle for the presidency, until Zemurray finally sold his company to United Fruit in 1929, just before the stock market crash. Just four years later, he would affect a dramatic, profanity-laden return to be named the president of his old competitor, United Fruit, and would rule his empire in Central America until 1950.[255] Banana exports grew throughout these internecine struggles, from around 1.5 million bunches in the 1890s to some 29 million bunches in 1929.[256] As James Morris describes:

> [The banana companies] had control over large expanses of the most fertile lands in northern Honduras... and in the context of the expanding capitalist world economy, foreigners were more able to take advantage of the investment opportunities than were Hondurans.[257]

The banana companies diversified into railroads, docks and shipping, electricity, ice plants, communications systems, sugar mills, soap factories and, crucially, banking.[258] As Edelberto Torres Rivas puts it, "in the first quarter of [the 20th] century, Honduras'

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[254] James Dunkerley, *Power in the Isthmus: A Political History of Modern Central America*, London, Verso, 1988, p. 148-152.
[255] William Krehm, *Democracies and Tyrannies of the Caribbean*, Westport, Lawrence Hill, 1984, p. 87.
[256] Ciro F.S. Cardosa, in Bethell, ed. *The Cambridge History of Latin America, Vol. 5*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986, p. 213.
[257] Morris, 6.
[258] Morris, 6.

Atlantic Coast, for all practical purposes, was occupied by the three great banana companies."[259]

Meanwhile, the grand struggles between the fruit companies might be read in U.S. history as the exciting hustle-and-bustle of capitalist enterprise; how thrilling, indeed, to see the captains of industry, pressing forward the march of progress by allowing their competitive self-interest to guide them into the ruthless struggle for more productive and efficient wealth creation![260] But this capitalist propaganda does little to capture the lived experience of such 'progress.' For Hondurans, there was very little to celebrate as American banana magnates tore up their physical and social geography, raising armies of Hondurans into deadly conflicts with other Hondurans for the right to exploit more Hondurans; deplorable conditions, coercive intimidation, legal manipulation and trickery all marshalled for the benefit of foreign owners. Gabriel García Márquez's 1967 masterpiece of historical fiction, *Cien Años de Solidad* (One Hundred Years of Solitude), knits together several pieces of the Latin American experience of foreign domination with anecdotal subtlety. In it, the banana companies occupy an important role; after a strike at the plantation, which had been supported by large sections of the town, is ended by a terrible massacre, García Márquez writes:

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[259] Torres Rivas, 34.

[260] One of many examples of this attitude can be found in gushings of American writer William Sydney Porter, pseudonym O. Henry, who escaped from the United States, where he was a fugitive, to Honduras in 1895. His *Cabbages and Kings* is a romantic account of great adventures undertaken by Americans – usually connected to the fruit companies – in Central America, replete with all manner of racist and Orientalist discourse, comparing Afro-Caribbean workers to 'black panthers,' and describing an Indigenous man as possessing 'inherited sloth.' As for American 'free enterprise,' he describes its arrival as follows: "The little *opera bouffe* nations play at government and intrigue until some day a big, silent gunboat glides into the offing and warns them not to break their toys. And with these changes comes also the small adventurer with empty pockets to fill, light of heart, busy-brained – the modern fairy prince, bearing an alarm clock with which, more surely than by the sentimental kiss, to awaken the beautiful tropics from their centuries' sleep." O. Henry, *Cabbages and Kings*, New York, Doubleday, 1904, p. 9.

> The official version, repeated a thousand times and mangled out all over the country by every means of communication the government found at hand, was finally accepted: there were no dead, the satisfied workers had gone back to their families, and the banana company was suspending all activity until the rains stopped.[261]

García Márquez is referring most directly to a massacre in 1928 in Colombia that took place at the behest of United Fruit and, although no comparable event took place in Honduras, it is instructive of the *attitude* of company owners, which was manifest in Honduras as everywhere else. While capitalist ideologues might dress up the banana companies' behaviour as a case of the mobilization of self-interest to contribute to the greater good, the companies' owners themselves knew and – in the early days – spoke openly about the nature of their project. A 1920 letter from Zemurray's vice-president to the company lawyer lays out in detail the steps that Cuyamel was to take in order to maximize its profits in Honduras. The full letter can be found in Appendix D and is worth reading, but for the immediate purposes it is enough to highlight point nine:

> We must disrupt the growing economy of this country and increase its problems in order to favour our own aims. We must prolong its tragic, stormy life, plagued with revolution; the wind must blow only upon our sails and the waves wet only our keels.[262]

The stunting and undermining of Honduran social, political and economic possibilities by foreign imperial capital, then, was neither progressive nor accidental and it will be worth

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[261] Taking such a small piece of what is a profound and heartbreaking piece of García Márquez's history of the fictional town of Macondo does injustice to the at once evocative and thorough picture he paints of the totality of the banana companies intrusion, destruction and domination of the places they went. A series of these evocative passages is reproduced in Appendix C. Gabriel García Márquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Toronto, Harper Books, 2006, p. 309-310.

[262] Quoted in Becerra, p. 149-150. It bears acknowledging that the authenticy of this letter has been called into question, primarily because it seems too forthcoming about the nature of the banana companies' project and because Becerra does not offer any information about his source. Nevertheless, in my reading of Becerra's work, I have not come across any inconsistencies or discrepancies between his historical record and other similar scholarship, so I have no reason to doubt that the letter was real.

bearing this in mind as we continue to examine these imperial relationships, especially in the contemporary context.[263]

Whatever 'development' took place was for the benefit of the fruit companies alone; Daniel Faber notes that "the railroads built by these companies led directly from

[263] The argument I am putting forward here, with respect to Honduras' historical trajectory and the legacy of foreign intervention, owes obvious debt to the so-called 'dependency theory' variant of postcolonial theory and, as such, I would be remiss not to locate the influence of this school of thought on my work. 'Dependency theory,' or the argument that the colonized peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America had been forced by coercion into a situation of chronic dependence on metropolitan states, emerged most prominently in response to programs and scholarship on 'development,' which often suggested that poor countries ought to try to replicate the processes through which metropolitan countries, themselves, became wealthy. The response was to argue that this was not possible, since metropolitan wealth was itself dependent on the domination and the imposition of dependence onto poor countries. Among the key proponents of this explanation of continued dominant relationship of metropolitan countries over postcolonial countries were Andre Gunder Frank, Samir Amin, Walter Rodney, Immanuel Wallerstein and Eduardo Galeano, whose *Open Veins of Latin America* was an attempt to demonstrate the continuity of Euro-American domination over Latin American peoples and states (a variant of this school of thought has been applied to Canada, a claim that I find unconvincing and which is taken up in Chapter 2.) Even in the context of the Global South, 'dependency theory' has been rightly critiqued for oversimplifying complicated colonial relationships; ignoring the crucial role played by local elite who collude and cooperate with colonial power to enhance their internal class position, for instance, has served to flatten the picture of class divisions internal to colonized or postcolonial states and deflect culpability for economic inequality from local leadership. Similarly, it sometimes offers little space for understanding class divisions internal to metropolitan states, especially as neoliberal globalization has dramatically increased the pressures that lead to massive migrations of people from Global South to North in search of work. Furthermore, many observers today argue that national capital is a thing of the past and that all capital has become 'transnational,' rendering the idea of state-directed forced-dependence less satisfactory in explaining ongoing colonial trajectories (this I find an unconvincing critique, as per my arguments in Chapter 2). Finally, it could be argued that the dependency school's critique of 'development' fails to break away from a capitalist teleology in which accumulation of capital on a mass scale represents 'development' and is necessarily 'good;' after all, both the metropolitan centres of capitalism and its so-called 'dependent' peripheries are both spaces of capital accumulation and, in both cases, inequality and poverty are prevalent. Nevertheless, much 'dependency' scholarship, including that of some of the above-mentioned figures, is able to overcome some of all of these limitations and offer convincing insight into the dynamics that have maintained a relatively consistent global geography of wealth and power distribution since the initial conquest and colonization of the Western Hemisphere and the related establishment and entrenchment of capitalist social relations. This is especially true of Central America; Victor Bulmer-Thomas writes, in his foreword to the English translation of Edelberto Torres Rivas' seminal work *History and Society in Central America*, "it was no accident that Torres Rivas' book first appeared in Chile. At the time, many of the leading social scientists in Latin America... were working in Santiago, developing the basic ideas of the dependency school. Much of the research done then has not survived the test of time, but [this book] is different for two reasons. First, Central America fits the ideas of the dependency school better than many other regions and countries to which dependency theory was applied. In the case of the banana industry, for example, controlled for all this century in Central America by foreign companies, the claim that the development of the centre and underdevelopment of the periphery are really two sides of the same coin is not unreasonable. Second, Torres Rivas allows his research to be infused with, but not dictated by, the methodology of the dependency school." Following Torres Rivas, then, I continue to draw, periodically and selectively, on the rich tradition that the 'dependency' school has provided, especially when its relevance touches quite directly on questions of Honduran history, but with a careful eye to its methodological and theoretical pitfalls. Victor Bulmer-Thomas, in Torres Rivas, x.

the coastal ports to the banana plantations and failed to integrate the rest of the country."[264] Indeed, the railroad situation was perhaps one of the best indications of the dominance of foreign interests in Honduran development; a U.S. newspaper in 1921 mused whimsically about the absurdity and backwardness of the country, pointing to the fact that Tegucigalpa was "the only capital in the North American continent that has never echoed to the more or less musical blast of the railroad locomotive and [was] one of the few railroadless capitals in the western hemisphere."[265] In fact, Tegucigalpa would never be served by a railroad; the north coast rail network wasn't even connected to the capital by anything more than a 'cart path' until U.S. military engineers completed a highway in the 1940s.[266] This was but one example of the myriad ways that state infrastructure reflected Honduras' continued colonial subjugation, a process mirrored in colonial situations across a variety of contexts.[267] As Ciro Cardosa explains it:

> The enclave economies of Central America had little dynamic effect on the national economies as a whole...this was particularly the case in Honduras, where the banana plantations and exports were the core of the national economy. In 1917-18, the *exemptions* granted to the fruit companies surpassed the total revenue of the Honduras state (emphasis mine).[268]

Of course, this imposition of underdevelopment did not take place without contest. Beginning in 1916, just as the struggle between the various banana companies was heating up, the workers on the plantations began to resist the dreadful conditions

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[264] Daniel Faber, *Environment Under Fire: Imperialism and the Ecological Crisis in Central America*, New York, Monthly Review Press, 1993, p. 34.
[265] "Tegucigalpa, New National Capital Has No Railroad: Honduras Has Mules And Carts To Convey Its Travellers," *Schenectady Gazette*, Nov. 18, 1921.
[266] Dunkerley, 526.
[267] For instance, today, in Canada's north, colonization of mostly-Indigenous northern communities is reflected in the fact that these communities often do not have roads connecting them; rather, all roads connect northern communities (and sites of enclave production like diamond mines) to major capitalist centres in the south.
[268] Cardosa, in Bethell, 214.

imposed on them. Six hundred workers struck at a Cuyamel plantation that year, and while the company could rely on the support of a compliant Honduran state to break the strike eventually, it discovered with some surprise that local policing agencies were not wholly sympathetic; the commander of the prison at Omoa released the workers who were brought there, insisting that their demands were legitimate.[269] A major strike at Standard Fruit saw over a thousand workers walk off the job in 1920 and another in 1925 at Cuyamel demonstrated that workers were not going to suffer in silence. In both cases, armed forces were brought to bear against the strikers, and the strikes were blamed in American and some Honduran newspapers on 'foreigners' infected with 'anti-Americanism.' This would be part of an important strategy of the alliance of foreign and local elite; in order to keep the working class divided between those on the plantations and those in the cities, the plantation workers would be characterized as 'lawless' and violent foreigners.[270] The strategy was successful, for a time.

It is worth noting, however, that the circumstances facing the peasantry and working classes in Honduras were significantly different from those in neighbouring Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua. Unlike those countries, where the establishment of a well-defined local ruling class had, by the opening of the 20th century, emerged around the expanding coffee-growing industry, both the ruling and subordinate classes in Honduras were less coherent and stable – the least developed in Central America, according to William Robinson.[271] This is sometimes referred to as the 'absent Honduran

[269] Victor Meza, *Historia del Movimiento Obrero Hondureño*, Tegucigalpa, Guaymuras, 1980, p. 13.
[270] Meza, 208.
[271] Robinson, 118

oligarchy' thesis, developed by Edelberto Torres Rivas[272] to explain Honduras' very different path to neoliberal globalization in the latter half of the 20th century. Robinson draws from Torres Rivas at length:

> According to this thesis, Honduras' lack of the rich volcanic soils of its neighbours, its geographical isolation, and a chronic labour shortage ever since the relatively small Indian population was decimated in the aftermath of Spanish conquest, stymied the rise of an agro-export oligarchy or of a national bourgeoisie tied to world markets. Whereas the introduction of coffee in the other Central American republics in the nineteenth century spawned the rise of a powerful coffee oligarchy and liberal revolutions, in Honduras there was no comparable process of internal accumulation that could develop the social structure.[273]

As a result, there was not the same kind of push, by an emerging local elite, to seize land from peasants in order to grow coffee or other export crops like sugar or cotton. Much of Honduran land, at the opening of the twentieth century, was held in the form of the *ejido* – a traditional Indigenous communal landholding system that was legally established in 1846 but had existed parallel to the Spanish colonial apparatus.[274] Many of the Indigenous communities that were given official *ejido* titles had seen dramatic declines in population and had, over time, mixed with *ladino* communities to such an extent that they ceased to identify as Indigenous, despite holding *ejido* title.[275] But the land was still held

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[272] As Robinson makes extensive use of Torres Rivas in this section, I will continue to draw from Robinson here, but Torres Rivas' original formulation can be found in the above-mentioned *History and Society in Central America*.

[273] Robinson, 119.

[274] William S. Stokes, "The Land Laws of Honduras," in *Agricultural History*, Vol 21, No 3, July 1947, p. 151-152.

[275] James Dunkerley argues, following Brignoli, that at the time the *ejido* was permanently re-introduced in Honduran law in the 1870s, *ladinos* outnumbered Indigenous people by 263,000 to 69,000. See Dunkerley, 19. However, questions of Indigenaity and identity are never straightforward, especially in parts of Latin America where repression and assimilation were intense. A thorough discussion of this problem lies outside the scope of this project, but Liisa North provides a useful note on this in *Between War and Peace*, explaining: "considerable controversy exists concerning the sizes of the Indigenous populations of Central American countries, especially since race is largely a question of self-definition in the region, as in Latin America in general. With racial mixing and the melding of Indigenous and European traditions, an individual can choose to become part of the dominant culture by learning Spanish and assimilating. In this

as communal holdings of peasant communities, *ladino* and Indigenous, and even when the banana plantations were introduced in the early twentieth century, they were typically established in areas that were thinly populated in the first place – often coastal swampland that was otherwise unoccupied.

This meant that while the peasantry was not yet a well-organized social force, neither was it under attack in the ways that peasants elsewhere in Central America were, and many Honduran peasants were able to maintain their smallholdings until well into the twentieth century. As late as 1952, some 85% of Hondurans still lived directly off the land, and fully 52% of Honduran land was still held by the national state or as *ejido* communities, meaning that agrarian reform could proceed without immediately antagonizing the landowning classes.[276] With comparatively fewer peasants being dispossessed of their lands, proletarianization was delayed and the problem for the mostly foreign capitalists in Honduras was actually chronic labour shortages. As Booth, Wade and Walker describe:

> The banana industry developed along the sparsely populated northern coast and displaced few peasant or indigenous communal holdings. Indeed, though generally poor in quality, land was nearly always plentiful. Thus, poor peasants could usually find free or cheap land to farm. Virtually no land shortage developed until the mid-twentieth century, when foreign market demands and urban population growth led wealthier Hondurans to begin a process of concentrating landownership.[277]

Thus, in a context of chronic labour shortage, the first half of the twentieth century saw Honduran workers in a position of some strength, when they could get organized and stand up to violent coercion. Despite efforts by the banana empires to divide urban and

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context, the tenacity of the remaining Indigenous peoples in holding on to their language and cultural practices is all the more remarkable." North and CAPA, 90.

[276] Richard Lapper, *Honduras: State For Sale*, Latin American Bureau, London, 1985, p. 49.

[277] Booth, Wade and Walker, 160.

rural workers, organizing continued, and by the late 1920s, there were two major workers' federations. The Honduran Federation of Unions (FSH) was the more radical of the two and organized not only against workplace injustice but, moreover, against capitalism at large. FSH unions were concentrated in the north, among the banana workers, but as their strikes grew in size and frequency and in the scale of the repression they evoked, workers in other industries in the north began to join and support them. In 1932, strikes broke out on the plantations and at the ports where the bananas were to be shipped; railroad workers joined in solidarity and the strikebreakers hired as scabs quickly joined the strike.[278]

The experience of workers on the banana plantations is beautifully and tragically depicted in Ramón Amaya Amador's above-mentioned *Prisión Verde,* one of the great classics of Honduran literature, first published in 1950 and a key document of the rising class consciousness among banana workers which was to come to a head in the general strike of 1954. Indeed, as Armando García argues, *Prisión Verde* "has been the most persecuted book in the country... many workers lost their lives or ended up in jail for daring to hold it, lend it, read it, give it away or sell it."[279] Amaya Amador – whose son Carlos has re-published many of his works and is today an activist in the Honduran resistance – weaves together the stories of a variety of banana workers caught in the sweep of injustices perpetrated by the companies, their foreign owners, and their local agents in a powerful – albeit stylized and stereotyped – fashion. Gringo plantation owners trick local peasants into selling their land, who only find themselves working for someone else on the land that was once theirs. Peasants that hold out on their land are

[278] Faber, 38.
[279] Armando García, "Medio siglo de Prisión Verde," *La Prensa*, Nov 25, 1995.

forcibly evicted by the thugs of the governing dictatorship. Gringo bosses are abusive and violent, and periodically rape Honduran women and abandon the children fathered by their violence. Deputized Honduran supervisors adopt gringo accents in symbolic deference to the real power on the plantations. When a worker is killed in a crane accident, the bosses get angry with the dead worker for the damage done to the machinery. When this injustice sparks a spontaneous strike action, it is brutally repressed and its leaders are killed.[280]

Amaya Amador's *oeuvre* includes nearly 40 novels, essays, and plays and covers a wide range of themes that struck at the heart of Honduran social and political struggles of the 20th century in a complicated and nuanced manner.[281] *Prisión Verde*, in particular, is reminiscent of Ecuadorian novelist Jorge Icaza's beautifully tragic *Huasipungo*, which similarly sketches an amalgam of exploitation and suffering that, in its blend of fantasy and reality, is open to accusations, by its detractors, of exaggerating the struggles of its protagonists.[282] Nevertheless, Amaya Amador's story reflects many of the realities of the banana fields, depicting them as spaces of complicated political contestation. While some of the workers insist upon forming a union, building a workers' movement, and ultimately leading a revolution, different groups of workers react with varying degrees of enthusiasm to these proposals. Amaya Amador is anxious to demonstrate that the colonial project implicates people in a variety of complex ways that often act to

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[280] Ramón Amaya Amador, *Prisión Verde*, El Progreso, Editorial Ramón Amaya Amador, 2002.

[281] *Operación Gorila*, for instance, offers a parable of the 1963 overthrow of President Ramón Villeda Morales, as orchestrated by the armed forces and banana companies, whose executives celebrate in the final scenes of the book, drinking to the destruction of the guerrillas and exclaiming: "we will never permit another Cuba in Latin America!" In *Biografía de un Machete*, Amaya Amador chronicles a campesino family in their struggle to maintain possession of their land and livelihood in the 1960s in the face of violence and pressure from the state and the oligarchy. *El Señor de la Sierra* presents an account of Lempira's stand against Spanish *conquistadores* Alvarado and Cáceres.

[282] Bernard M. Dulsey, "Introduction," in Jorge Icaza, *Huasipungo*, Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale, Illinois, 1964, p. ix.

undermine the construction of collective solidarity. He also stresses the importance of thoughtful and considered strategy, alongside the passion and emotional expression that is necessarily part of resistance, in his depiction of a strike called too soon; the story's central hero, Máximo Luján, tries to persuade the workers to choose their moment more carefully but their outrage wins the day, and the strike takes place in a way that opens itself to the repression that follows. Nevertheless, despite the tragedy of the stories he tells, Amaya Amador closes with a call to action. After Luján is assassinated by the company "because he brought the truth and the light to the hearts and minds of the workers," Amaya Amador reminds his readers that "not all is dark in the green prison…your own voice will determine the struggles of the future."[283]

Nonetheless, the banana companies had the full toolkit of US imperialism at their disposal, and repression was efficient when it came down. When full scale armed assault seemed unlikely to break the will of the strikers, US officials and banana company representatives used a combination of bribery and coercion to acquire names of union or strike leaders, who would then be rounded up individually and deported or imprisoned. And by the mid-1930s, they had found their man in Honduras. Tuburcio Carías, Honduran *caudillo* who ruled from 1932 to 1948, was quick to demonstrate his commitment to the success of the banana empires, shutting down all unions, closing all newspapers, and banning public demonstrations.[284] Those who disobeyed these laws were punished severely, as when over 100 peaceful protestors were killed by the military in San Pedro Sula in 1944. Indeed, his presidency was marked by strict and terroristic repression; he established complete National Party dictatorship over the country, with

[283] Amaya Amador, 297.
[284] Faber, 38.

local party officials set up as regional *comandantes de armas* who governed by force. He celebrated his most vicious *comandantes*; of Carlos Sanabria, who was accused of wiping out entire villages in the Department of Colón, Carías said: "would that I had seventeen Sanabrias, one for every department of Honduras."[285] His *Ley Fernanda* empowered armed forces to arrest untold hundreds on suspicion of aiding communism, and he even moved to ban baseball, lest people should turn their bats against his regime.[286]

Carías cultivated the friendship and mutual support of neighbouring dictators – Generals Ubico and Martínez in Guatemala and El Salvador respectively – and considered the support of the United States his most important asset. As such, he ensured that his policies largely satisfied US interests as, for instance, when he established an internal passport and spy network with the support of United Fruit, whose management was keen to confront workers' organizing drives.[287] In particular, Carías invited the United States to help him build, train, and equip an air force, such that in the 1930s and 40s, no other Central American dictator relied so heavily on air power and none could challenge its supremacy. Between 1933-1947, US colonels ran the aviation school, and four of the six instructors at the school were American. Their position guaranteed that they virtually commanded that wing of the military; one such US Captain reported in 1940 that he was "in absolute command of the Air Force" and reported directly to President Carías. The eight planes which made up the fleet – including heavy bombers and gunners – were all sold to Carías by the United States, and were used in many of his brutal campaigns, "sowing panic and death" in the words of his War Ministry.[288]

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[285] Krehm, 91.
[286] Krehm, 91.
[287] Holden, 78.
[288] Holden, 78-79.

THE 1954 STRIKE AND THE FOUNTAIN OF HONDURAN HISTORY

Nevertheless, worker militancy, especially in the context of continued labour shortages, was not defeated. While many labour organizations were disbanded, unofficial ties remained, especially those established within or around the communist parties – accustomed as they were to operating clandestinely.[289] After Carías stepped down in 1948, and the political system re-opened somewhat, organizing was reinvigorated and the ensuing period of mobilization would lead to the general strike of 1954 from which, according to Dana Frank, "all of modern Honduran history flows."[290]

The strike began on the banana plantations, with workers at United Fruit demanding double-time pay for work during the Sunday of Holy Week. Port and hospital workers were the first to actually strike, after a worker was fired for dropping – as the perhaps exaggerated story goes – a single stem of bananas at Puerto Cortés. Soon all of the stevedores at the docks at Tela were on strike, and the banana plantations near El Progreso and La Lima were next; by May 5, 1954, all of the workers of the two primary banana empires – United Fruit and Standard Fruit – were on strike. A week later, they were joined by workers at Rosario Mining, the Honduras Brewery, and British American Tobacco Company, such that the total number of strikers was somewhere near 50,000.[291] As Alison Acker describes, "peasant families fed the strikers, telegraph workers cut the line to Tegucigalpa, students, teachers and small tradesmen contributed to the strike fund. The campaign became an unprecedented show of worker solidarity."[292] Nevertheless, it is important to note that while the solidarity was impressive, the strike itself maintained,

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[289] Acker, 82.
[290] Dana Frank, "Hondurans' Great Awakening," *The Nation*, April 5, 2010.
[291] Dunkerley, 529.
[292] Acker, 83.

as Dunkerley asserts, "a resolutely syndicalist form throughout its course [...] despite Guatemalan influence and [Honduran Communist Party] involvement,"[293] which is significant in light of subsequent accusations of communist-inspiration by the United States and its local allies (more on this below.)

The outcome of the strike – both its victories and defeats – was to have enormous consequences for the Honduran labour movement. The 50,000-strong strike was able to demand significant, though certainly not adequate, pay increases and secured the creation of an official union for United Fruit workers (SITRATERCO) as well as gaining a number of specific terms of employment. The strike and its aftermath also paved the way to the creation of the first Honduran labour code in 1959, with all of the contradictory advantages and disadvantages such legislation typically brings.[294] But those contradictions were even more acute in the Honduran case because of the conditions under which the strike was ended. As the US began to rapidly increase its presence in Honduras to counter the reforming Arbenz government in Guatemala (more on this below), it encouraged hysteria among the Honduran elite and, indeed, even labour activists about the dangers of a communist takeover. This hysteria would be stoked, among the Honduran strikers themselves, by US trade unionists ostensibly brought in to demonstrate solidarity and assist with logistics.

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[293] Dunkerley, 529.

[294] I am referring here to the fact that the institutionalization of labour relations into codes of law both protects workers from certain forms of exploitation but also reifies, naturalizes and codifies the labour relation itself, thus weakening the ability of labour movements to think – and act – outside of the logic of the labour relation. Thom Workman builds a compelling case for this contradictory consequence of codified labour laws in the Canadian context, wherein he celebrates the victories that protected workers against the harshest and most inhumane expressions of labour exploitation but also laments the fact that the increasingly complicated legal apparatus in which labour operates lends itself to the creation of labour bureaucracies and enmeshes workers' organizing efforts in a whole host of legal spider webs designed to contain workers' demands and clearly delineate (and limit) the strategies they can use to achieve them. Please see Thom Workman, *If You're In My Way, I'm Walking: The Assault on Working People Since 1970*, Winnipeg, Fernwood Books, 2009.

In what became a typical pattern of interference,[295] the American Federation of Labour (AFL) – a bureaucratic business union organization in the US – established itself among Honduran labour, ostensibly as an ally, in order to encourage a passive and non-confrontational line within the Honduran labour movement.[296] First, they helped convince the workers at Standard Fruit to accept a deal that satisfied a few demands but left many others ignored and which, crucially, failed to include language that would protect union activists from post-strike reprisals.[297] Predictably, then, key organizers of the strikes were laid off when the strike was over, as part of the purge of more radical elements of the labour movement.[298] Meanwhile, as anti-communist panic reached a fever pitch, the strike committee at United Fruit began to break down, mired in back-and-forth accusations of communist sympathies. A second strike committee was eventually struck, handpicked and sympathetic to the AFL, which settled with United Fruit in early July. AFL President George Meany played both sides, encouraging concessions on the workers' side and pressuring United Fruit to negotiate a deal quickly, lest the unions should "fall into the hands of militant communists, which would have disagreeable consequences for our country's position in Latin America."[299] Again, the strikers did make gains, but the victory was limited and certainly did not reflect the power of a strike of 50,000 people. Moreover, it established the conservative presence of the AFL, which would set up shop in Honduras and use it as its base of operations in Central America thereafter.

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[295] For more on this pattern, please see Kim Scipes, *AFL-CIO's Secret War against Developing Country Workers*, Toronto, Lexington Books, 2010. For more detail on the AFL-CIO in Central America in particular, see Tom Barry and Deb Preusch, *AIFLD in Central America: Agents as Organizers,* Albuquerque, The Resource Centre, 1986.
[296] Liisa North and CAPA, 84-85.
[297] Dunkerley, 530.
[298] Dunkerley, 531.
[299] George Meany, quoted in Lapper, 38.

The AFL's preferred instrument in Central America was its Inter-American Regional Organization (ORIT), which was established in 1951 and played a key role in the settlement of the United Fruit strike. The ORIT advisors cultivated good relationships with the directors of the fruit companies and with the emerging military as it was being reorganized under the auspices of the United States. ORIT was a branch of the AFL but got funding from the CIA and USAID, the latter spending tens of thousands of dollars building offices for the now ORIT-controlled unions at both United Fruit and Standard.[300] While militant workers tried to fight for independence, compliant and cooperative workers were offered lucrative positions as union leaders and given expensive training in the United States. Independent unions were largely squeezed out, and the labour code of 1959 made it illegal for more than one union to operate at any workplace; one of the contradictions noted above, then, was that the labour code which ought to have helped protect Honduran workers from American employers actually left them at the mercy of American trade unionists with an imperialist agenda.[301]

Indeed, 1954 was a watershed for Honduras and for Central America at large, with the CIA-orchestrated overthrow of Guatemalan President Jacobo Arbenz playing a crucial role. Arbenz, who took aim at the United Fruit Company in Guatemala and was working to build a more social-democratic state and economy, was an anathema to US interests in the region and the decision to have him overthrown was less a matter of "if" but "how and when." In 1952, the CIA chose Carlos Castillo Armas, a Guatemalan colonel exiled in Honduras, to lead the invasion from Honduras. Honduran president Gálvez was quick to collaborate but expected US military protection should Castillo

[300] Lapper, 39.
[301] Dunkerley, 530-532.

Armas be defeated and chased by the Guatemalan army into Honduras. These concerns grew during 1953 when Castillo Armas made little secret of his plans, which, by early 1954, were known to Arbenz and had been published in Guatemalan newspapers.[302]

As the US worked to up the pressure on Arbenz, it made no secret of using Honduras as its launching pad, and when the general strike broke out in April 1954, it was immediately framed as part of an Arbenz-led communist conspiracy; after all, Arbenz and the strikers had a common enemy in the United Fruit Company. When, in May, a Swedish ship arrived in Honduras with a shipment of arms destined for Arbenz's government, US president Eisenhower and Secretary of State Dulles discussed the prospect of dropping some 4000 marines into Honduras to intervene.[303] Instead, on May 20, an agreement was signed with Gálvez for major military assistance from Washington – organization, equipment, and training for a new, professional infantry unit – for which materials began arriving just five days later in a very public demonstration of American power in the region.[304]

The new US-trained infantry unit was to be established quickly, given the rapidly escalating developments in Guatemala and the continued general strike in Honduras, taking place on the eve of what was expected to be a contentious election, which featured former dictator Carías and candidate Ramon Villeda Morales of the Liberal Party, which the US (incorrectly) believed to have been infiltrated by communists loyal to Arbenz. The US Ambassador, Whiting Willauer, demanded that the new infantry unit be prepared for action by October, when the elections would take place, attributing likely election disorder to "communist infiltration of the Honduran labour movement," which could

[302] Holden, 178-179.
[303] Holden, 179
[304] Holden, 179

"require extraordinary internal security measures at any time between now and the forthcoming elections."[305] Willauer had a clear vision of his goals for Honduras – for which he was singled out for praise by Secretary of State Dulles later – and described them as follows:

> [We had to] keep the Honduran government – which was scared to death about the possibilities of themselves being overthrown – keep them [sic] in line so they would allow this revolutionary activity [the CIA's training of the Castillo Armas forces] to continue, based in Honduras.[306]

To that end, the US had to ensure that Honduras had military capabilities and that it was in control of them. Furthermore, it had to keep a lid on any potential popular movements, whether rooted in labour or the Liberal Party, that might threaten the US grip on Honduras, which was so essential for maintaining its control of the region.

A picture begins to emerge, then, of the ways in which the development of the Honduran ruling elite – stunted in comparison to its neighbours – relied more heavily perhaps than any in the region on the support of imperial power even while its subordinate classes were less organized and defiant than elsewhere. Unlike in Guatemala, El Salvador, or Nicaragua, Honduras did not have a functional, autonomous, and unified national military force until it was established by the United States in the 1950s.[307] Nor did it have the massive social dislocations associated with intensive export-oriented capitalist development as experienced elsewhere and, as a result, social movements of peasants and working classes rarely came together in unified action before the general strike of 1954. The response to collective action was typically a combination of accommodation and repression – in contrast to the swift and brutal repression

[305] Whiting Willauer, quoted in Holden, 180.
[306] Whiting Willauer, quoted in Holden, 180.
[307] Holden, 178-186.

experienced in other parts of Central America – and meant that much of the hyper-violence of the regional civil wars of the 1960s, 70s and 80s was to be avoided in Honduras.

Nonetheless, contemporary Honduras is arguably one of the most violent countries in the western hemisphere and undeniably one of the poorest, and one major element of the explanation for that is the pattern of foreign domination that dates back to Honduras' beginnings but which intensified dramatically after the pivotal events of the mid-1950s and during the US Contra Wars in the 1980s. This period, which provides the immediate context for the June 2009 coup, and during which Canada became more directly involved in Honduran affairs, will be the subject of Chapter 4. Nonetheless, it is worth concluding this chapter with the reminder that Honduran history has, from the moment of European conquest, been heavily influenced by the politics of colonial rule. Even after gaining formal independence, Honduran people and resources have consistently been targeted as potential sources of profit for European and North American interests. This is a crucial context for an understanding of Canadian foreign policy in Honduras – and the dynamics into which Canada has inserted itself – and it is a context that Hondurans themselves are well aware of. Indeed, what will become most apparent over the course of this dissertation is precisely the continuity between the dynamics described in this and the next chapters and those which Canadian foreign policy is driving today.

CHAPTER FOUR – HONDURAS' TWENTIETH CENTURY

A central purpose of the previous chapter was to offer a sketch of Honduran history that highlights the very complicated and diverse forms that colonial and imperialist impositions on this country have taken, in order to show continuity between those original forms and the ones that can be seen in Canada's policies towards Honduras today. If imperialism took only one basic form – that of direct colonial occupation and domination – it would no longer make sense to speak of imperialism in Honduras since the country has been formally independent since the 19th century. Nor would it be sensible to call Canada's current role in Honduras imperialist, since Canada is not engaged in any long term military occupation of Honduran territory. As such, it is crucial to this project to establish that the dynamics of imperialism can be – and have been – played out in a variety of forms. This chapter will describe in detail the contemporary forms of imperialism that have manifest in Honduras in the last fifty years, with particular emphasis on the neo-colonial dynamics that persist into the present. Indeed, this chapter will highlight the many ways in which local Honduran power structures have linked themselves into imperialist projects – sometimes with progressive intentions, sometimes in order to reinforce their own privilege, sometimes both – making it more difficult to separate foreign interference from the local exercise of power. This complexity can serve to obscure the ongoing imperial relationships that continue to bear heavily on local structures of power. This chapter will demonstrate how those dynamics have played out over the past half-century and insist that they require a complex theorization in order to understand the current moment – and the role Canadian imperialism is playing in it – in Honduras.

SO-CALLED "PROGRESSIVE BONAPARTISM"

Before returning to the matter of direct foreign intervention, which becomes a central axis upon which Honduran history in the second half of the twentieth century turns, it is worth looking quickly at the development of the two-party political system in Honduras. Both the Liberal and National (conservative) Parties were formed near the end of the nineteenth century, though the party labels did not hold much significance until well into the twentieth. During the period of upheaval prior to the *Cariato* (a name used to describe the period of the Carías dictatorship), the parties simply gave legitimacy to one *caudillo* or another, signifying more about where his supporters came from than what they held as program or ideology. The Carías dictatorship itself established the National Party in Honduran politics, as Carías doled out regional military – and therefore political – leadership posts to the *comandantes de armas* from the National Party. The Liberal Party, though periodically cast as a haven for communists, was never anything near that characterization. Rather, it was the party of the modernizing elite – those in the ruling class who sought to emulate the European and North American paths of capitalist development – and it, too, had little compunction about seizing power by force.[308]

After Carías stepped down in 1948 and elections became more regular, both parties had some popular support, but the military – established largely by the United States in the 1940s and 50s – routinely intervened if it determined that a given president from either party was taking the country down what it considered to be the wrong path, a point to which I will return. After the early 1980s, other political parties were allowed to participate in the elections, but the Liberal and National Parties continued to gain the most support, in part because of the continued practice of patronage and the relatively

[308] Booth, Wade and Walker, 180-181.

large resource pool those parties could draw from in currying favour; when electoral turnout was at its peak in the early 1980s, it had more to do with the fact that the major parties were giving away untold tons of meat to their supporters than any excitement around party platforms.[309]

It is worth keeping this in mind, as we turn our attention to the major changes that beset Honduras during this period, as a reminder that these developments could hardly be claimed to flow from the ideologies of the official parties or, what is more, any kind of quasi-democratic electoral process. Instead, Honduran politics after the 1954 strike came to be dominated by a constellation of social forces – the foreign-owned banana companies, the office-seeking *políticos*, an emerging Honduran oligarchy, the church, and to a much lesser extent the peasantry and working classes – all under the watchful eye of the newly professionalized and increasingly autonomous Honduran military and its closest allies in the U.S. State Department. Indeed, no chief of the Honduran armed forces retired between 1954-1981 without first serving a stretch as Honduran president.

William Robinson describes the political impotence of the Honduran elite in the period leading up to and following the events of 1954:

> The inability of the civilian elite to manage the tensions of capitalist development in the post-WWII period underlay the military coup d'etat of 1956. The coup signalled the transformation of the military from a corrupt constabulary in the pay of the oligarchy and the banana companies into a politicized and institutionally autonomous corporate body mediating class and intra-elite conflict.[310]

The primary conflict this new military apparatus would have to navigate was the sudden scarcity and struggle over land, and the ensuing process of agrarian reform, which some

[309] Elvia Alvarado, *Don't Be Afraid, Gringo: A Honduran Woman Speaks from the Heart*, Food First, San Francisco, 1987, p. 120.
[310] Robinson, 120.

have argued was crucial in forestalling the kind of guerrilla struggles that emerged elsewhere in the region.[311] Beginning in the 1950s and accelerating in the 1960s, the fruit companies began to mechanize, shedding workers and expanding the size of their plantations. They – alongside an emerging Honduran oligarchy – also began to diversify their operations into more land-intensive crops like cotton and sugar or into cattle ranching.[312] Combined, this meant that many plantation workers, who had formerly been peasants, went back to their communities to find their traditional holdings under attack. As ranchers and increasingly large landowners began a new round of enclosures – in some cases literally erecting barbed-wire fencing around formerly peasant-held land – the number of evicted peasants and laid-off plantation workers swelled and was amplified by an influx over several decades of up to 300,000 peasant refugees fleeing the same policies, imposed with even more aggression, in neighbouring El Salvador.[313]

For the first time, land scarcity had become a serious problem in Honduras. Peasant organization followed quickly, given the experiences of many former plantation workers with organizing in the unions, and three separate peasant organizations had become significant by the 1960s. The National Federation of Honduran Peasants (FENACH) was the most militant and had close ties with the various communist movements that had persisted in the face of repression throughout the early twentieth century. A rival group, the Association of Honduran Peasants (ANACH), was created under the auspices of the AFL-sponsored ORIT labour unions and used all manner of underhanded tactics to undermine FENACH and seize control of the peasant

[311] Bulmer-Thomas, in Bethell, ed., p. 223.
[312] North and CAPA, 85.
[313] North and CAPA, 74.

movement.[314] A third group, the National Union of Peasants (UNC) was organized around the Catholic Church and offered an alternative to ANACH though it, too, was anti-communist and somewhat less militant than FENACH.[315]

With both large landowners and peasant organizations demanding that the government protect their access to contested land, the Honduran military often became the arbiter between the various classes, allowing certain presidents to enact limited agrarian reform while cutting them off – generally by effecting a military coup – if they took the process far enough to significantly alienate the foreign and local oligarchy.[316] In general, a limited degree of land reform had the support of the military and its allies in the United States as a way of avoiding the perceived communist-inspired social struggles in neighbouring countries. But there was no way to satisfy the demands of both the banana companies and landed oligarchy, on the one hand, and the increasing numbers of landless peasants on the other. The military found its solution to the problem in the scapegoating of Salvadoran refugees for the land crisis – egged on by the newly-formed landowners association, the National Federation of Honduran Cattlemen and Farmers (FENAGH), who insisted that the scarcity and conflict was caused by "foreigners who were usurping rural territories."[317] The so-called "Futbol War" of 1969 would be the illogical conclusion of this pressure for land.

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[314] For instance, since ANACH was sponsored by the U.S. trade unions and worked closely with the Honduran state, it was able to offer *campesinos* a certain amount of land without the threat of violent repression (which was often the case when FENACH occupied lands), thus drawing *campesinos* into its orbit with the promise of peaceful land reform which would ultimately prove to be limited in scope and which undermined and further isolated the more politicized FENACH and the broader platform of emancipatory struggle it offered. For more on ANACH's undermining of FENACH, see Dunkerley, 538-565.

[315] North and CAPA, 85.

[316] Booth, Wade and Walker, 162.

[317] FENAGH, quoted in William H. Durham, *Scarcity and Survival in Central America: Ecological Origins of the Soccer War*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1979, p. 162.

The "Futbol War" – a chaotic five-day battle so named because its immediate spark came from a riot at a World Cup qualifying match – was initiated by the Honduran state's decision to approve a measure to seize lands in Honduras held by Salvadoran *campesinos* and redistribute them to Honduran nationals. Nevertheless, this clumsy non-solution to the land crisis backfired; the Salvadoran army invaded and the skirmish quickly became a rout of Honduran forces, cut short only by the intervention of the OAS to demand a Salvadoran retreat.[318] What is more, most of the casualties of the conflict were *campesinos* – Salvadoran and Honduran alike – in the areas targeted for the Salvadoran invasion, near Ocotopeque and Langue, and many who escaped the immediate violence were nonetheless displaced during the high season, contributing to major crop failures. Counter-attacks by the Honduran army, though ineffectual in repelling Salvadoran forces, sowed no small degree of panic amongst Salvadoran *campesinos*, of whom another 60,000 fled back to El Salvador, which did, in fact, help to ease land tensions in Honduras briefly; the second half of 1969 saw the greatest single period of land re-distribution at any time before or after.[319] Meanwhile, the nationalist fervour stoked by the conflict temporarily flattened out some of the class-based tensions, safely diffusing them into patriotic cooperation between the military, the state, and the trade unions and – ironically – the defeat of Honduran forces built popular support for a strong military unlike ever before.[320]

But conflict over land quickly re-emerged, and throughout the 1970s land reform proceeded, with the military overseeing various presidents in navigating between the

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[318] Dunkerley, 547-549.
[319] Dunkerley, 549. That said, it only ramped up the pressure on land in El Salvador, contributing to the growing tensions that would explode into major violence in the 1980s.
[320] Dunkerley, 548-550.

oligarchy and peasant organizations in a manner that was heavily tilted towards the landowners but which managed to diffuse enough tension to forestall any major armed uprisings. The military government of Oswaldo López Arellano, for instance, was installed in a coup in 1972 and proceeded with a program that James Dunkerley has referred to as 'progressive Bonapartism,' inspired in part by Peru's 'military revolutionaries,' which included land redistribution, the establishment of a minimum wage, and strengthened labour laws.[321] Agrarian reform proceeded, then, and although plenty of conflict emerged (more on this below) the reforms were enough to avert the kinds of disasters that resulted from conflict over land in other parts of the region. Indeed, as Richard Millett argues in Lowenthal and Fitch's important survey of the role of militaries in mid-20th century Latin America, "while the Honduran military openly ruled the nation from 1963 through 1981, it always allowed civilian politicians some power,"[322] a fact that no doubt played a further role in forestalling civil war in Honduras.

Nonetheless, it is worth briefly noting that the trend in scholarship on Honduras to write its history in a comparative analysis with the other republics of Central America, while quite sensible and natural on a number of levels, often has the effect that discussion of Honduras tilts on the question of how and why Honduras avoided the violent guerrilla struggles and counter-revolutionary genocides that plagued its neighbours.[323] This is, obviously, a worthwhile and instructive question, but it can inadvertently lead to the conclusion that things were altogether not bad in Honduras, an assumption that can be

[321] Marvin Barahona, *Honduras en el siglo XX*, Tegucigalpa, Editorial Guaymuras, 2005, p. 220-226.
[322] Richard Millett, "The Central American Militaries," in Abraham F. Lowenthal and J. Samuel Fitch, ed., *Armies and Politics in Latin America, Revised Ed.*, New York, Holmes and Meier, 1986, p. 216.
[323] This is true of almost all of the good regional studies – many of which are among the very best resources on Honduras and are routinely cited in this project – including those of Torres Rivas, Dunkerley, Bulmer-Thomas, Woodward, Robinson and Booth, Wade and Walker.

sustained only if Honduras is viewed in relation to those other countries. Taken out of the context of the hyper-violence characteristic of much of Central America in the second half of the twentieth century, the violence in Honduras must still be considered severe and deeply traumatic and must be central to any examination of contemporary problems – especially as the historical trajectory in Honduras has seen a slide into violence that, today, is as bad or worse than in any of the other Central American countries.

The 1960s and 1970s, then, while a placid period relative to neighbouring countries, were nonetheless a troubled time for Honduras. Land reform, though it did proceed, did not do so without violence and difficulty. The role of the military as arbiter should not lead to the assumption that it acted with restraint;[324] as noted above, it generally still sided with the landowners and used violence to keep the peasant movements at bay. In 1963, the military cracked down on FENACH, destroying offices and imprisoning leaders – many of whom were tortured – at El Progreso; the organization would be wiped out for good in 1965 when military President Lopez Arellano sent troops to El Jute to kill FENACH leader Lorenzo Zelaya and many other key members of the group.[325] In 1972, eight peasants were massacred at Talanquera during an attempted land occupation, which had asked for the presence of a Catholic priest; Father Luis Henas, shaken with terror after discovering the bodies and hearing first-hand accounts of the

[324] Booth, Wade and Walker, for instance, describe the military as having "behaved, although not well, more benignly than its counterparts in neighbouring states." Though true on some level, this framing allows for a too sympathetic reading of the military's role in Honduras, especially as it was being equipped and trained by the United States and carrying out a degree of violent repression that must still be considered intolerable and, most certainly, Honduran social movements considered it so. In fairness to Booth, Wade and Walker, they do emphasize that the repression was only *comparatively* less violent, and the critique I offer here is one that suggests the problem as being located in the nature of comparative analysis of Central America in the 1980s, not in any irresponsibility of individual scholars.

[325] Dunkerley, 542.

attack, offered a full testimony of his experience, but, like many of his brethren, was too intimidated to offer continued direct support to the peasant movements.[326]

Indeed, the clergy themselves – originally strong supporters of the peasant land occupations – began to be targeted in the mid-1970s and, in a particularly gruesome attack, two priests were murdered in Olancho in 1975; Father Iván Betancur and Father Jerome Cypher were kidnapped and taken to the estate of José Manuel Zelaya, whose son, José Manuel Zelaya Rosales, was the very man elected president in 2005 and overthrown in the 2009 coup – an irony to which I will return in chapter 5. Alison Acker describes the horrific attack:

> Both priests were stripped and beaten. Cypher was castrated and shot. Betancur had his eyes gouged out, his fingernails, tongue and teeth pulled out, his hands, feet and testicles slashed off. The bodies of the two men were thrown down a well with those of the five peasants [killed in a related attack] and the two women [kidnapped with Betancur] were thrown in alive. The soldiers sealed the well off with a blast of dynamite. The landowners and military went on to pillage every church, convent and parish house in the Department of Olancho, arresting or expelling thirty-two priests and nuns.[327]

The attack had been initiated by FENAGH – which had put a price on the two priests' heads – and carried out with military support, leaving the two priests and seven peasants who had been grabbed at a UNC training centre dead; nine others were found buried in the walls or burned to death in bread ovens at a ranch near Juticalpa.[328] Though some of the officers involved in this attack were charged and sentenced to prison terms, many church groups were intimidated away from supporting peasant movements and the attacks continued with frightening regularity. Just two years later, when the Las Isletas

[326] His full testimony is reprinted in Becerra, 197-198.
[327] Acker, 97.
[328] Dunkerley, 557.

peasant banana cooperative ran afoul of Standard Fruit, the military, led by soon-to-be infamous then-Col. Gustavo Alvarez, intervened to dismantle the cooperative, jailing and torturing hundreds of peasants who had been members.[329]

This not-so-idyllic period of "progressive Bonapartism," or military-directed corporatism from above, was able to avert the collapses into genocide and horror that befell Honduras' neighbours, but it did not resolve Honduras' land crisis nor did it eliminate the growing tensions between insurgent subordinate classes and recalcitrant foreign and local oligarchs. But it did serve to ease those tensions and to allow certain outlets for them; unlike in neighbouring countries, the state did not clamp down completely on political parties, unions, peasant organizations, and the press, and there was thus still some space for these groups to function, forestalling the impetus toward guerrilla struggle. As Booth and Walker argue, "the state never sufficiently repressed legitimate mass mobilization to the point of triggering armed resistance as a last resort;" although one might disagree with their definitions of what constitutes 'legitimate' mobilization and how armed resistance may or may not fit into that, it is most certainly the case that the repression elicited by guerrilla struggles elsewhere in Central America led to incalculable bloodshed, destruction, and hardship, and Hondurans were the better for having avoided the worst of it.[330] Even still, by the end of the 1970s, military rule was discredited and all social classes were dissatisfied. Indeed, as Honduran historian Marvin Barahona notes,

> Military reformism lived with the consequences of the principal contradiction manifest in the developmental state, as expressed in the permanent conflict between the social forces pushing for

[329] Richard Lapper, *Honduras: State For Sale*, Latin America Bureau, London, 1985, p. 80.
[330] Booth, Wade and Walker, 167.

> reform and the classes and sector resisting that change. The military reformist regime could not escape this conflict.[331]

It became increasingly clear that the compact of the 1960s and 1970s could not be held together any longer and the issue at hand was to determine what would replace it.

It is worth remembering, of course, that the compact of that period was always one that suited best the interests of foreign capital, which had tolerated the development of an autonomous Honduran military on the understanding that it would answer, in the final analysis, to the U.S. state. For foreign capital, then, it was simply a matter of keeping the U.S. state on side, bribing the right Honduran officials at the right moments, and demanding the cooperation of the military when necessary. In 1975, for instance, when the Honduran state was considering a proposal to impose a one-dollar tax on every 45-pound crate of bananas exported, the fruit companies revolted. Standard Fruit destroyed thousands of boxes of bananas in protest and United Brand attempted to buy off the Honduran economic minister with a bribe of $1.25 million. Had the bribe – and the so-called 'Bananagate" scandal that followed – not been discovered after the dramatic suicide of one of United Brand's top officials, it might well have succeeded; as it happened, the scandal brought down the Arellano government, which was replaced by Gen. Alberto Melgar Castro from the National Party who quickly dropped the tax and invited company people to be part of his cabinet.[332]

Most crucially, the United States maintained significant influence over the Honduran military, which, as discussed above, was the political authority of last resort in this period. As it had in the early days of the Honduran Air Force, the entire military was brought under the wings of U.S. advisors in the 1950s, and between then and the late

[331] Barahona, 226. (Translated from Spanish. All translations by the author unless otherwise indicated.)
[332] Dunkerley, 556-558.

1970s over 1000 Honduran officers received direct U.S. training.[333] Booth and Walker have noted, with some irony, that "although [during this period] there was virtually no guerrilla opposition to the Honduran government, much of the military training of the era dealt with counterinsurgency and put a strong emphasis on 'national security,'"[334] which would have enormous consequences for developments later on and which fit the pattern of U.S. interference in the region as national militaries were being developed not so much to protect against outside invasion but to make war against their own people. The notorious School of the Americas in Panama, where the U.S. military trained various Latin American regimes in the most brutal forms of repression and state terror between 1946 and 1986, is an instructive example of the Monroe Doctrine in practice during this period.[335] Many Hondurans were trained there, though the majority of Honduran trainees came through the Francisco Morazán Military School, established by the U.S. military in Honduras in 1952.[336]

Direct U.S. influence in matters of state was exercised irregularly but decisively. When a civilian government was overthrown in a violent coup in 1963 – as described in Ramón Amaya Amador's *Operación Gorila* -- that saw fighting in the streets of Tegucigalpa, the U.S. did nothing to intervene and then-Secretary of Defence Robert McNamara claimed, "the United States cannot be everywhere simultaneously." Nevertheless, despite this cynical deflection, joint American-Honduran training exercises were routine in the 1960s and 1970s – the large-scale "Operation Brotherhood"

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[333] Booth, Wade and Walker, 161.
[334] Booth, Wade and Walker, 161.
[335] The infamous School of the Americas was founded in 1946 in the U.S.-controlled Panama Canal Zone and trained some 60,000 Latin American military and police officers, many of them implicated in some of the worst atrocities of Latin America's counter-revolutionary reactions of the 20th century. Chalmers Johnson, *The Sorrows of Empire*, Henry Holt & Co, New York, 2004, p. 136-137.
[336] Dunkerley, 533.

simulating an attack at Toncontín airport had taken place in 1962, only months before the coup – and the U.S. took every opportunity to use Honduras in its anti-communist activity, as in the establishment of a radio station in northern Honduras to project propaganda to Cuba.[337] Of course, U.S. involvement in Honduras for the purposes of carrying out its regional objectives had only just begun; between 1978 and 1980, the U.S. spent some $10 million beefing up the Honduran armed forces,[338] and the invasion of Guatemala in 1954 from Honduras would be a model for Honduras' role in America's wars in Central America in the 1980s.

As the 1970s were drawing to a close, then, social and economic pressures were finally starting to boil over into significant social unrest; 68% of Hondurans were unable to meet their basic daily needs.[339] Military rule in Honduras was approaching the *nadir* of its utility for the foreign and local elite, just at the moment that Honduras was to become central to U.S. military aims in the region. This apparent contradiction would play itself out in one of Honduras' darkest chapters, a time during which the country would come to be disparagingly dubbed the 'U.S.S. Honduras.'

CONTRA WARS AND THE U.S.S. HONDURAS

In 1980, the Honduran military peacefully relinquished political power, a move that was designed – by the military and its allies in the U.S. – to forestall more dramatic civil unrest. Certainly the peaceful transfer of nominal power was remarkable in contrast to the rest of Central America; fearing a civil war that could undermine the strength of the armed forces, the military chose to hand over power peacefully rather than risk its own destruction in the effort to hold on. A constitutional assembly was struck in 1980 and

[337] Becerra, 173.
[338] Booth, Wade and Walker, 169.
[339] North and CAPA, 83.

wrote a constitution in 1981, which called for elections later that year. Those elections were held and, rather than install their own man, the military surprised some observers by allowing the winner to come from the Liberal Party.

Roberto Suazo Córdova took office in 1982 and immediately established close relations with the new government in Washington, led by Ronald Reagan. As Honduras became the base of American operations against revolutionary movements in other parts of Central America – especially Nicaragua – it also became the focal point of military spending and training. As a result, just as political power was supposedly being transferred to civilian authorities, the military was growing in size and strength and so, not surprisingly, the head of the armed forces, Col. Gustavo Alvarez Martínez, became the *de facto* head of Honduras, exercising more real power than the president or congress.[340] Nationalists within the Honduran armed forces would grow weary of Alvarez's catering to U.S. interests and, in 1984, he was ousted from his position. But civilian governance did not flow from Alvarez's departure; in 1985, Suazo Córdova attempted to establish himself for a second term in office and was blocked by the military, which interceded in order to force a new set of elections in which north coast neoliberal José Azcona Hoyo won on behalf of the Liberal Party.[341]

Azcona's term began at the height of U.S. involvement in Honduras, during the period in which neoliberal reform was first being systematically imposed on countries and peoples of the Global South. Honduras would be no exception, but with U.S. economic and military aid flowing in order to maintain support for the American occupation, Azcona was not pressured to enact neoliberal reform as hard as elsewhere.

[340] Booth, Wade and Walker, 163.
[341] Booth, Wade and Walker, 168-171.

But once the *Sandinistas* were defeated in Nicaragua and U.S. regional involvement began to decrease, the full force of Honduras' economic underdevelopment in the era of globalization would be felt, and Azcona's successors, Rafaél Callejas and then Carlos Roberto Reina, were pressured by the IMF and USAID to implement the neoliberal 'medicines' that typified the moment. By the mid-1990s, civilian governments began to curtail the power of the military and transferred the national police forces to civilian control, signalling a meaningful shift away from military rule, just as the full neoliberalization of Honduras – and the dramatic polarizations of wealth associated with it – was taking hold; this was no coincidence.

But before turning to the neoliberalization of Honduras, it is worth looking in more detail at the 1980s, the period in which foreign domination of the country was perhaps never so visible and violent; indeed, the period is commonly described as one of full U.S. occupation, and it set the stage for the contemporary era of North American imperialism in Honduras. In the first place, the incomplete transfer of power from military to civilian rule has to be understood as being part of a broader strategy – on the part of a dominant section of the U.S. and Honduran elite – to transform, not eliminate, the system of domination in Honduras. Washington, understanding that it needed Honduras as a compliant base from which to organize its wars of counterinsurgency in the region, sought to construct an edifice of political legitimacy in the state where its influence would be the most visible, on the so-called 'U.S.S. Honduras.' Nominally clean elections in 1981 and the establishment of civilian governance in 1982 would be a key element of that project; the transition helped to diffuse tensions among labour and

peasant organizations and established the parameters under which the U.S. and its allies in Honduras could manage social conflict with a mixture of coercion and consent.

Between 1980-1992, the U.S. spent some $1.6 billion in military and economic aid to Honduras, intended to establish the apparatus of repression, buttress the institutions of political power and infiltrate and co-opt the civil society organizations that were best positioned to harness social unrest.[342] Robinson describes the project as follows:

> The U.S. strategy was based on converting Honduras into a platform and rearguard for region-wide counterinsurgency and counter-revolution, given that it bordered on all three countries facing revolutions. The strategy involved three dimensions: 1) the development of a functioning polyarchic system; 2) a dramatic expansion and modernization of the military, including the further militarization of the Honduran state and society (even though this objective was in contradiction with the first); and 3) economic restructuring and capitalist modernization.[343]

Although this was a project of American imperialism, it was undertaken with the consent and cooperation of certain sections of the Honduran ruling class – in particular, the north coast oligarchs who would emerge as the most powerful section of the local elite in the decades to follow. Both the foreign and local oligarchy benefited from the transition to civilian rule, insofar as it – and the massive introduction of USAID funding and interference in civil society organizations that came with it – derailed the growing movements for more radical change that were emerging from the workers and peasants' organizations as economic conditions had deteriorated. As Joaquín A. Mejía, Victor Fernández, and Omar Menjívar argue in their critique of the 1982 constitution:

> A key element of the U.S. counterinsurgency strategy was oriented towards reducing the popular movement to its minimum expression and destroying the nascent revolutionary organizations in the country, to maintain control over any

[342] See Lapper, 46-103 and Robinson, 120-123.
[343] Robinson, 121.

> opposition to the project of turning Honduras into [Washington's] counterrevolutionary base in the region.[344]

Thus, to the extent that military rule had provided a clear target for the frustrations fuelling the growing social movements, those movements could be somewhat deflected by having their energies diverted into the electoral politics of the two-party system.

It is of much significance to contemporary problems that this period established what has been called a "national security state" in Honduras. The presence of the U.S. military itself, along with the counterrevolutionary Nicaraguan Contra forces, was a major part of that; hundreds of thousands of U.S. soldiers were involved in military exercises in Honduras, and some 20,000 Contra fighters were trained and based in Honduran territory. The U.S. established a number of its own military bases, airstrips, training centres and other facilities, and it used massive exercises as both demonstrations of its power and as cover for arms transfers to the Contra fighters.[345] Meanwhile, infamous U.S. ambassador John Negroponte worked closely with Gen. Alvarez, and between 1982-1984 the pair were, for all intents and purposes, the highest authorities in Honduras. Upon his election in 1982, President Suazo Córdova was given a twelve-point list of 'suggestions' by Ambassador Negroponte, which he was to follow during his term if he wanted to benefit from the U.S. occupation. I spoke in 2012 with Dr. Juan Almandares, then-director of the Autonomous University of Honduras (UNAH), who expressed Negroponte's power in Honduras by telling this anecdote:

> I had a meeting with Negroponte because he said he wanted to meet some of the personalities in the country. He invited me to dinner with him at the Embassy. When I arrived, some other

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[344] Joaquín A. Mejía, Victor Fernández, and Omar Menjívar, *Aspectos históricos, conceptuales y sustanciales sobre el proceso Constityente en Honduras*, Tegucigalpa, Movimiento Amplio por la Dignidad y la Justicia, 2009, p. 20.
[345] Lapper, 77-92.

> political advisor attended to me; Negroponte was at the table with me, but he was seated at a higher level, we were down below. He didn't say anything, Negroponte, for twenty minutes – he just looked at me. And I didn't say anything either. And after twenty minutes, he said, "are you going to be re-elected at the university?" And I said, "when are you going to pull out American military bases in Honduras, because we don't want you here." And he replied, "when you are re-elected." And I understood what he meant.[346]

This occupation of Honduran territory was certainly a major element of the militarization of the country, as the Honduran military cooperated with the occupation and sought to strengthen its own position through it. Between 1976 and 1984, the Honduran military doubled in size and established a framework of internal control that began to look more like those that were established under the dictatorships elsewhere in the region. Civilian branches of governance – like immigration, customs, and telecommunications – were increasingly militarized, new installations and facilities were built across the country, and counterinsurgency units were established.[347] The most notorious would be Battalion 3-16, a clandestine organization that would function as an official death squad for the state; the first of its kind in Honduras.[348] This new repressive apparatus, facilitated by the U.S. occupation, targeted the burgeoning social movements that had grown in the 1960s and 1970s to ensure that these movements would not develop into significant revolutionary guerrilla struggles. Though limited in size and scope and nowhere near the level of Guatemala, El Salvador, or Nicaragua, opposition groups had begun to form some small guerrilla factions, and although some of the organizations were

[346] Interview with Juan Almendares, May 4, 2012.
[347] Margarita Oseguera de Ochoa, *Honduras hoy: sociedad y crisis política*, CEDOH: Tegucigalpa, 1987, p. 27-35.
[348] North and CAPA, 87.

muted by the re-introduction of civilian rule, others grew bolder in opposition to the U.S. occupation.[349]

In a certain sense, the establishment of the national security state brought about the very challenges it presupposed; claiming to be responding to internal threats, it was as much creating them as it was reacting to them. Robinson describes the two sides of Honduran military buildup:

> If participation in the regional counterrevolution was one side to militarization, the other was to contain the popular movement inside Honduras, and more specifically, to prevent it through pre-emptive repression from developing into a revolutionary armed movement... [To that end], Honduras was visited in the 1980s by counterinsurgency and state terrorist methods never before used in the country, such as "anti-terrorist" laws, disappearances, and state-organized death squads, as the population fell victim to the same mass violation of human rights as in neighbouring countries.[350]

Until his ouster in 1984, Gen. Alvarez was at the heart of the new repressive apparatus. An admirer of Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet and of the so-called "Argentine method" of widespread disappearances during Argentina's 'dirty war' of the 1970s, [351] Alvarez had been the officer in charge of the violent attacks, jailings, and torture of members of the Las Isletas co-operative in 1977, as described above. He expressed a fanatical hatred for communism – whether real or exaggerated to cater to the U.S. occupation – and claimed that "everything you do to destroy a Marxist regime is moral."[352] To that end, his Battalion 3-16 kidnapped, tortured, and killed hundreds of Honduran civilians in the early 1980s, with particular emphasis on the leaders of the

[349] Barahona, 269-275.
[350] Robinson, 124.
[351] North and CAPA, 87.
[352] Lapper, 80.

incipient guerrilla movements, which were largely wiped out.[353] One former member of the death squad described his experiences, years later in Toronto, saying:

> At first, we were told to drop any kids we kidnapped in the park; later, we were told to kill them too. And instead of shooting, we were told to use machetes or knives. For torture sessions, we used electric shocks, the hood, and the bucket, filled with stones, hung from the victim's testicles.[354]

For his efforts, the architect of Battalion 3-16, Gustavo Alvarez, was flown to Washington to receive a Legion of Merit in 1983. But by 1984, his excesses had become untenable to his erstwhile allies in Washington; anti-American demonstrations in Tegucigalpa indicated that Hondurans who had expected a shift to democracy blamed the U.S. occupation for the descent into state terror. American aid money was flowing in and lip-service was being paid to democracy in Honduras, especially since it was democracy the U.S. claimed to be bringing back in its wars against Nicaragua and El Salvador, but few were convinced by this farce. As one peasant leader explained, "there is plenty of money to build military airports, construct ports and buy arms. Here you have the spectacle of military manoeuvres that cost millions of dollars in the very zones where peasants are dying of hunger."[355]

So when younger officers in the Honduran army deposed Gen. Alvarez, the U.S. allowed it to take place, in the hopes that his departure would ease tensions and facilitate the continued U.S. occupation.[356] They were right; after Alvarez, the repressive

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[353] North and CAPA, 87.

[354] José Valle López, quoted in Acker, 116. This testimony was delivered to Alison Acker in 1988, as Canadian-based activism around solidarity with Honduras was building. I will return to this interview, and this activism more generally, in chapter 6.

[355] Quoted in North and CAPA, 83.

[356] While this should not invite any sympathy for Gen. Alvarez, it is perhaps worth noting the speed with which U.S. imperialism discards its no-longer-useful allies. The ouster of Alvarez took place just a year after his being honoured in Washington, and just five years later he was assassinated in Honduras while working as a street preacher for an evangelical Christian church. By contrast, his ally John Negroponte

apparatus loosened up a little bit and the United States was able to pursue its aims in Central America, using Honduras as a base until its objectives had largely been reached in the late 1980s, at a cost of untold thousands of Central American lives. But while winning the armed struggles against anti-capitalist guerrilla movements was the primary goal for the United States, it is crucial to remember that an almost-equally important aspect of the U.S. occupation was shaping the trajectory of capitalist development that was to follow. It was, after all, at precisely this moment in the history of world capitalism that the crises of overaccumulation, stagnation, and declining profitability in the advanced industrial centres was necessitating the neoliberal shift, and the project of neoliberal globalization was underway.[357] Central America, like everywhere else, had to be forced into the new capitalist paradigm. In Honduras, the military occupation facilitated American oversight of this transition, such that by the early 1990s, the capitalist classes had undergone a major transformation and Honduras no longer looked like the 'banana republic' of old.

But that transition was painful, and it is no surprise that anti-American sentiment rose to perhaps its greatest heights during this period. Victor Bulmer-Thomas has argued that, from the end of the *Cariato* in 1948 to the 1980s, Honduras retained a continuous

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went on to serve as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, as deputy Secretary of State, and – go figure – as U.S. ambassador to occupied Iraq. Adrienne Pine, *Working Hard, Drinking Hard: On Violence and Survival in Honduras*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2008, p. 55-56. The point of such a comparison is to highlight that, in the context of ongoing imperial projects, colonial hierarchies remain embedded even in the relationships between class allies. U.S. treatment of its used-up compradors in the Global South puts the lie to any claim that nation and race cease to be significant in the era of transnational capitalism.

[357] There is no shortage of material on the neoliberal globalization project. David Harvey's *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* is perhaps one of the best systematic overviews of neoliberalism, though it is by no means the only one. David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2005. David McNally's *Global Slump* offers a compelling picture of neoliberalism – as located in the broader history of world capitalism – that informs my own understanding of this period of capitalist development. David McNally, *Global Slump: The Economics and Politics of Crisis and Resistance*, Fernwood, Winnipeg, 2011.

reformist thread: "the pace of reform had always been modest and had occasionally ground to a halt, but the direction of change was clear."[358] But the transitions that took place during the 1980s set the stage for the neoliberal transformation that, in the 1990s and 2000s, would bring Honduras' continuous reform to an end, would exacerbate poverty, inequality, and social unrest, and would culminate in the social movements that would ultimately provoke the 2009 coup and the return of military rule. In the first place, the human rights crisis initiated under Gen. Alvarez continued well after his ouster and undermined the basis for functional political processes. Alvarez's anti-terrorist laws – which were not repealed after he left power – made peasant land occupations a 'subversive' act and radically increased the power of the armed forces to prevent and punish them.[359] A key pillar of Honduras' unique developmental path – access to land – was to be forcibly ended.

And while Honduras was spared the hyper-violence of its neighbours, it is notable that Alvarez's security apparatus continued to target political opponents well after he was removed, so that despite the shift to nominally civilian governance, space for political critique was, in fact, shrinking; witness the cases of Cristóbal Pérez, a *campesino* leader who led a May Day demonstration in 1986 and was shot dead in front of his house just one week later,[360] or popular Honduran actor Isidro García España, hospitalized after a brutal beating by police forces after he spoke at an anti-contra event in 1987.[361] Indeed, beginning in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, human rights organizations repeatedly insisted that Battalion 3-16 had been re-activated, though they were often

[358] Bulmer-Thomas, in Bethell, ed., p. 223.
[359] Acker, 122.
[360] Alvarado, 119.
[361] Anne Manuel, *Human Rights in Honduras: Central America's 'Sideshow,' An Americas Watch Report*, May 1987, p. 28.

ignored by the international and, increasingly, the Honduran media.[362] Indeed, the violence perpetrated by Battalion 3-16 and the rest of the repressive machine in the 1980s possessed a self-sustaining quality; once it had been established in Honduran society, it occupied a permanent role, perpetually undermining the progress of democratic rule of law and struggles for social justice, as in the early 2000s when Honduras experienced a spate of extra-judicial but state-sanctioned vigilante assassinations of children who appeared to have connections to street gangs, a point to which I will return.[363] Journalists, meanwhile, though not officially censored or controlled, experienced just enough periodic violence to be sufficiently threatened into a kind of 'self-censorship,' and they were routinely bribed into writing – or shelving – stories that either flattered or criticized the military or its allies.[364]

At the same time, the palpable and complete authority exercised by the United States over successive Honduran governments in the 1980s was deeply damaging on a variety of levels. Though Honduras had suffered foreign domination in multiple forms for centuries, the U.S. occupation in the 1980s was unique both in its totality and its publicity. Honduran authorities – on behalf of their American overlords – denied the presence of the contras in spite of widespread knowledge of their whereabouts in the international press,[365] prompting editorial mockery of Honduras as a 'puppet' of the U.S. and accusations by other regional leaders that Honduras had completely surrendered its autonomy and sovereignty to 'Yankee imperialism.'[366] All the while, the Reagan administration demanded compliance from Honduran leaders – using the USAID funding

[362] Pine, 56-58.
[363] Pine, 56-69.
[364] North and CAPA, 87-88.
[365] Bulmer-Thomas, in Bethell, 221.
[366] *El Tiempo*, March 31, 1987.

upon which many of its institutions had become dependant as leverage – whenever it needed support for one or another aspect of its regional war. For instance, periodically in the mid 1980s, the Honduran government was called upon to 'request emergency assistance' from the U.S. in the aftermath of 'attacks' launched against it from Nicaragua or El Salvador; in each case, the 'attacks' in question were minor and routine skirmishes between revolutionary and counterrevolutionary forces along the border zones and posed no meaningful threat to Honduran sovereignty. These 'urgent appeals' provided justification for U.S. manoeuvring but were, in their transparent vacuity, further humiliations for the pretence of Honduran autonomy in international politics.[367]

Added to the mix of problems presented by the American occupation was the blight of ecological destruction, dramatically intensified during this period. Honduran forests were ravaged by cutting, by toxic defoliation and by forest fires that resulted from U.S. and contra training exercises. Over 1,000 square km of forested area was destroyed in the 1980s, including regions that were part of re-forestation programs designed in response to earlier erosion damage.[368] Erosion has been a serious problem in Honduras, given its mountainous topography; as the forests have been eliminated, landless peasants have settled in deforested areas to try to make ends meet, but the soil is vulnerable to erosion, silting, and flooding, and hundreds of families have seen their land become useless or have died in floods. In fact, this has contributed to the failure of land reform since the 1980s, as some 9,000 of the 22,000 families who received land between 1975-1988 had to abandon it when it turned to clay.[369] To make matters worse, the defoliants used by the U.S. military were highly toxic and not only damaged the soil but also

[367] Acker, 125-127.
[368] North and CAPA, 88.
[369] Faber, 142.

leeched into the water table, adding to already serious crisis in Honduras' water supply.[370] These toxic chemicals also produced a resistant strain of mosquito and aggravated the spread of malaria,[371] while contributing to catastrophic declines in plant and animal life upon which Honduran ecosystems are dependant, from massive fish kills in the Guayape River to scores of dead birds lining the mangrove channels along the Gulf of Fonseca.[372]

Even Hondurans who had cooperated with the American occupation were becoming disillusioned by the disproportionate distribution of its rewards. The military increasingly resented the 'rain of dollars' that fell on American and Nicaraguan Contra fighters while their Honduran counterparts sat idle. *Políticos* from both parties were sick of being humiliated by the Reagan administration, and popular opinion, which had never favoured the presence of the Americans or the Contras, had become increasingly disaffected and volatile, especially as those Honduran officials well positioned in the distribution of aid money were accused of unprecedented levels of corruption.[373] Allegations of growing child prostitution and the spread of sexually transmitted disease – including HIV/AIDS – in regions servicing U.S. troops further alienated the traditional and religious sectors, which joined the various progressive social movements in rallying against the American occupation.[374] Meanwhile, peasants already frustrated by the slowed pace of land reform were increasingly disrupted by conflict along the border and were even, by the mid 1980s, finding their lands usurped by the Contras themselves.[375]

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[370] Faber, 4.
[371] North and CAPA, 88.
[372] Faber, 109.
[373] North and CAPA, 88.
[374] Acker, 127.
[375] Bulmer-Thomas, in Bethell, 222.

One 450 square km Contra installation in the south had displaced over 16,000 *campesinos* by 1987, and the violence perpetrated by Honduran death squads was matched by that of the Contras themselves, who terrorized Honduran civilians and even members of the Honduran military who were noncompliant, as in the case of Ricardo Zúñiga, an officer who testified against Contra abuses in the United States, only to be assassinated shortly thereafter.[376] As the 1980s wore on and these conditions worsened, anti-Contra and anti-American demonstrations in the capital drew tens of thousands of people from a variety of sectors and the burning of U.S. flags was a common occurrence.

The flames of discontent were fanned by the economic changes that were being wrought by – and under – the occupation. With a still small and relatively weak local capitalist class, Honduras continued to seek foreign direct investment, but in the context of the escalating conflict, there were few investors to be found. Successive Honduran governments, beginning with the military regimes of the early 1980s and proceeding through the Suazo Córdova and Azcona administrations, turned to both USAID and the IMF for loans, which would be granted on condition of neoliberal reforms of austerity and stabilization.[377] The effects of the world recession of 1982 began to set in significantly as the still-ubiquitous banana companies slashed wages and scaled back their workforce. At the same time, IMF-directed cuts to social services and public spending exacerbated growing social crises, and the structural adjustment measures imposed on fiscal policy, such as the creation of free ports and tax-free *maquiladora*-zones, only undermined the state's ability to finance its skyrocketing debts.[378] Prices were rising just as wages were falling and unemployment was growing, and although

[376] North and CAPA, 88.
[377] Bulmer-Thomas, in Bethell, 222.
[378] Bulmer-Thomas, in Bethell, 218-225.

USAID loans eased the pain a little, they were nowhere near the amount that was needed to address the growing social crisis. As poverty afflicted the countryside, people flocked to urban centres looking for work, and Tegucigalpa grew in the 1980s to become more like the capitals of the other Central American states with, in Woodward's words, "accompanying overcrowded housing, suburban development, air pollution and rising crime rates."[379] By 1986, the Honduran state debt hovered around $2.5 billion,[380] well beyond anything the state could ever expect to pay back, setting the stage for deeper IMF and U.S. penetration of Honduran fiscal policy and the entrenchment of the new neoliberal economic order.

Indeed, as noted briefly above, it is significant that the *maquiladora* industry – today a centrepiece of foreign-dominated (and often Canadian-dominated) Honduran capitalist development – had its legal and political frameworks established during the U.S. occupation. Though the first *zona libre* (ZOLI) laws were passed in 1976 and 1979 to facilitate exports from Honduran ports, the crucial pieces of structural adjustment were passed in the 1980s. In 1984, a temporary import law was passed so that foreign capitalists could bring materials and equipment into Honduras exempt from duties, provided that the products were to be exported, and could avoid paying tax on their profits for up to ten years.[381] Full-scale *maquiladora* laws were established in 1987, and these industrial processing zones (ZIPs) were designed, legally, as public service industries, making it easier to clamp down on attempts by workers to organize.[382] The political and legal architecture of neoliberalism, then, was established during the decade

[379] Woodward, 273.
[380] Antonio Murga Frassinetti, quoted in *El Tiempo*, June 2, 1986.
[381] Pine, 137.
[382] Pine, 137.

of most direct foreign imperial occupation, and as the dramatic U.S. military presence in Honduras was to recede in the late 1980s, it left behind it the conditions for Honduras' violence-plagued and poverty-stricken 1990s and 2000s, during which new imperial powers like Canada would step in to take advantage of Honduras' weakness in order to profit from the escalation and entrenchment of the neoliberal project. The next section will provide an overview of the neoliberal transformation; I will discuss Canada's particular role in Honduran neoliberalism in Chapter 7.

THE IMPOSITION OF NEOLIBERALISM

By the end of the 1980s, both the Liberal and National parties had aligned themselves to neoliberalism. The Liberals' traditional supporters in the merchant and commercial classes were comfortable with a move towards IMF-sponsored restructuring, and the National Party had undergone a transformation whereby the formerly dominant strata from the military and landed elite had been supplanted at the core of the party by the "new right," made up of the emergent north coast oligarchy centred on the nascent *maquiladora* industry.[383] Conflicts and fractions within the Honduran capitalist class were contentious during the 1980s but were suitably enough patched up by the early 1990s so that its primary institution, the Honduran Council of Private Enterprise (COHEP) had selected leaders and endorsed political candidates that lined up with the IMF and with USAID in a long term strategy that sought to complete the neoliberalization of Honduras under the leadership of a capitalist class rooted in Honduras but dependent on its transnational connections and – as always – on foreign

[383] Euraque, 153-162.

investment.[384] This dominant position within the Honduran elite would be represented – more or less, and with no small amount of pressure from international capital – by every administration, led by either party, right up to (and partially including) that of Manuel Zelaya. For the Honduran oligarchy, linking up with circuits of capital that originated in the Global North was to be the strategy going forward and those factions that succeeded in doing so would become the most powerful in the country.

As noted above, the stage for the neoliberal transition was set under the auspices of U.S. occupation in the 1980s. Nonetheless, the ongoing violent conflict during that time made the prospects for private investment bleak. As such, neoliberalism in Honduras was stillborn; the free port established at Puerto Castillo was empty, and lack of taxation did not stop some $100 million per year from fleeing the country, for a total of nearly $1.5 billion in capital flight by the end of the 1980s.[385] It wasn't until the fall of the *Sandinistas* in Nicaragua in 1990, with the resultant departure of the U.S. military and the gradual regional demobilization and peace process, that the neoliberal reforms had any major effects. Indeed, a return to profitability and accumulation in Central America was dependent upon a successful transition to peace, which made the New Right an unlikely proponent of the process.

Indeed, this is a point that deserves some emphasis, as there is much literature on Central America that celebrates, sometimes perhaps too uncritically, the regional peace process and partial demilitarization that took place in the 1990s. William Robinson's

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[384] An approach that was ironically encouraged by many otherwise progressive American scholars in the heady days following the Peace Accords, as in Schultz and Schultz's important contribution in 1994. Donald E. Schultz and Deborah Sundloff Schultz, *The United States, Honduras, and the Crisis in Central America*, Westview Press, San Francisco, 1994, p. 328-333.

[385] Kent Norsworthy and Tom Barry, *Inside Honduras*, Albuquerque, Inter-Hemispheric Education Resource Centre, 1993, p. 54.

work on this period is an unparalleled exception, and I draw significantly from him in this sub-section. His assessment of the peace process is incisive – and bears heavily on the unpredicted events of 2009 – and is here quoted at length:

> The gradual demilitarization of state and society that took place in the 1990s in Honduras and elsewhere was not a sign of a rupture between a period of conflict and one of pacification, as so much of the literature proposes. The military became anachronistic in the 1990s in Central America once the revolutionary forces were contained, peace had been imposed, and the structural coercion of the globalization process had taken hold. Demilitarization occurred in the 1990s because the military and its far-reaching influence became both unnecessary and unproductive for the transnational agenda, and because a new fraction of the bourgeoisie and the bureaucratic elite was vying for hegemony over the internal political system and felt constrained by the military. A new bourgeoisie was coming into existence and trying to impose a coherent direction on society on the basis of larger worldwide transformations and the possibilities they opened up.[386]

Out of the conflict of the 1980s, then, emerged a very different Honduras in a very different world. Counterrevolution had won in Central America and global capitalism had been imposed upon the former-communist blocs and, in the era of neoliberal globalization, the new capitalist classes needed an efficient and compliant local elite who could rule without the cumbersome disruptions of ongoing conflict and military domination and who could, instead, guarantee a state of security for profitable investments.[387] A small but determined fraction of Honduran capital was ready to lead the country through that transformation, in the hopes that it could plug into neoliberal globalization and gain access to its rewards. By the mid-1990s, the military's role in governance had been significantly reduced, and after the military was seen to have

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[386] Robinson, 130.

[387] Claudia Virginia Samayoa, *Ejecuciones Extrajudiciales de jovenes estigmatizados en Centroamérica*, Programa Seguridad Juvenil en Centroamérica, San Salvador, 2011, p. 218-219.

bungled its response to Hurricane Mitch in 1998, the civilian government rebuked the military and dismissed its highest officers, demonstrating that the neoliberals were now in charge.[388] Once their project took hold – as has typically been the experience of poor countries linked into the globalization project -- it was no simple matter to get out, as discipline could be enforced by the agencies of international capital without any need for significant military interruption.

As a result, successive Honduran governments capitulated to the neoliberal project with a greater or lesser degree of structural coercion. Rafaél Callejas (1990-1993) championed the project and initiated many of the policies and international agreements that allowed it to take root. Carlos Roberto Reina (1994-1997) was elected on a populist platform that criticized neoliberalism. But when he tried to dissolve or re-negotiate a variety of loans and SAPs, he quickly found himself threatened with suspensions of aid – which would have crippled institutions that had become dependent on USAID and IMF loans – and denial of debt relief. Together, these measures would have plunged the Honduran economy into crisis, and the threat of their application successfully altered Reina's position. He was replaced by Carlos Flores Facussé (1998-2001) who, himself, came from the same fraction of the bourgeoisie as Callejas and happily entrenched Honduras even deeper into the neoliberal project.

That project began in earnest, then, in March 1990, when Callejas launched the *paquetazo*, a "grand package" of economic reform that put several billion dollars of IMF and USAID money into maintaining stability through the first major structural adjustment policies (SAPs) which included painful austerity measures ranging from crackdowns on labour to the elimination of price controls with simultaneous tax hikes on consumption,

[388] Booth, Wade and Walker, 172.

as well as moves towards privatizations of state enterprises, reductions or eliminations of tariffs on exports and a 50% devaluation of the Lempira.[389] Many progressive observers – understandably pleased with the end of the civil wars but unable to grapple with the gravity of the policies being undertaken in their aftermath – described the reform process as if it were 'painful but necessary medicine,' even as they listed the austerity measures that were driving poor people even deeper into poverty, from 100% increases in water, electricity, fuel, and telephone rates to dramatic layoffs of public employees.[390]

A second set of SAPs was undertaken by the Reina administration, called *El Gran Proyecto de Transformación Nacional* or "The Great National Transformation Project," which sought to insert Honduras more intensely into globalization by promoting non-traditional exports and marketing the country as a tourist destination. This entailed establishing more and larger free trade zones and spending public funds on energy and transportation mega-projects that would facilitate the expansion of business.[391] This represented massive public infrastructure development that was openly intended to serve only private capital's interests; as Roger Marin, a representative of the Reina government described, "the primary objectives are designed to satisfy the needs of the international community and not the needs of the domestic market."[392] Not to be outdone, the Flores administration, which took office in 1999 and was made up of many of the architects of the earlier SAPs, established a third round of such adjustments in the early 2000s.

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[389] Andy Thorpe, "Honduras: The New Economic Model and Poverty," in Victor Bulmer-Thomas, ed., *The New Economic Model in Latin America and its Impact on Income Distribution and Poverty*, MacMillan, Basingstoke, 1996, p. 223-248.
[390] Schultz and Schultz, 273-277.
[391] Thorpe, 223-248.
[392] Roger Marin, quoted Jesuit Reflection, Research, and Communication Team (ERIC), "Maquila: The Swallow That Lays Golden Eggs," *Envio*, vol. 16 no. 194, Sept. 1997, p. 24.

The effects of neoliberal adjustments like these are well documented in much of the critical political economy tradition, and Honduras followed many of the predictable patterns. Devaluation of the currency meant that anyone whose savings were held in local currency saw rapid and dramatic drops in the value of those savings, plunging people deeper into poverty and making them increasingly desperate for work of any kind, even when it paid less than living wages. The shifting of tax regimes away from taxing imports and exports and towards taxing consumption meant that while big capitalist firms got a break, the tax burden was shifted to those who were reliant on the local market for their survival; that is, ordinary people who needed to buy food, pay for services, use public transportation and so on. Austerity measures and privatization meant that services formerly provided by the state at low or no cost, ranging from health and education to provisioning of water and telecommunications, were subject to funding cuts (reducing both the number of people who worked in these industries and the quality or quantity of the services provided) or were sold to private firms who would run these services for profit, such that people would have access to less services for higher cost. The free trade zones, of course, were havens for capital to exploit labour at higher-than-usual rates, taking advantage of already-existing inequality to foster even greater inequality. The net result of such policies, whether imposed on people in the advanced capitalist economies or in the Global South, was a deeper polarization of wealth between those at the top, who benefited from enhanced structural conditions for exploitation and capital accumulation, and those at the bottom, whose bodies and resources were squeezed ever harder and were forced to survive on less and less. Extreme wealth and extreme poverty, then, were fostered together.[393] This pattern was as evident in Honduras in the 1990s as anywhere.

[393] This section represents a sketch of the general effects of neoliberal policies as they have been imposed

The Honduran economy was to see rapid and profound changes as a result of the SAPs and the introduction of neoliberalism. Among other things was the immediate maturation of the mostly foreign-owned *maquiladora* industries, especially in electronics and apparel, which grew from 26 factories in 1990 to nearly 200 in 1996. In that same time, the number of workers in this highly exploitative sector grew from 9,000 to over 75,000 with some $112 million in clothing exports alone, making the *maquiladora* industry the third largest generator of foreign exchange in the country.[394] Tourism also grew rapidly, especially along Honduras' north coast and the Bay Islands, which fostered new and similarly exploitative job markets in service provision, as did large-scale agriculture, often in new fruits and vegetables grown for export. These emerging sites of exploitation and accumulation were increasingly serviced by private-sector organizations that worked with the state to promote the new industries and exports, usually financed by USAID and IMF money.[395] Privatization pressures led to the sale of Honduran airports and energy industries, and an attempt to sell the Honduran Telecommunications company (HONDUTEL) though the latter was blocked, leading to further punitive pressures from the IMF.[396]

Of crucial importance in all of this was the escalation of the process of proletarianization of Honduras' peasant classes. Given the importance attributed to peasants' access to land in the period prior to the conflicts of the 1980s, and the role that access played in forestalling the worst of the violence of the 1980s, it should be

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around the globe, all of which can be applied to Honduras. I will again point to the work of Harvey and McNally as excellent sources on these dynamics, and I will here add Petras and Veltmeyer's *Globalization Unmasked*, which does well to bring that broader analysis into the context of Latin America. James Petras and Henry Veltmeyer, *Globalization Unmasked: Imperialism in the 21st Century*, Fernwood, Halifax, 2001.

[394] ERIC, 16-22.

[395] Thorpe, 223-248.

[396] Booth, Wade and Walker, 171.

emphasized that the neoliberal turn in Honduras has actively and aggressively undermined the remaining spaces of non-capitalist production in that country. Following the uprooting of peasant communities which reached high points prior to the 'Futbol War' in the late 1960s and the Contra conflicts of the 1980s, a variety of structural forces were set into motion under neoliberalism to tear remaining peasants from the land and force them onto the capitalist labour market, in the hopes that they would fill up the *maquiladoras* and the service sectors, or enter into wage labour on large-scale agricultural or mining operations. The shift from political to economic strategies of proletarianization relied on the initial uprooting of peasants by the military conflict, but was increasingly characterized by structural reform that included the deeper commodification of land, the privitazation of credit mechanisms which effectively ratcheted up interest rates and left campesino communities at the mercy of a market that had been forcibly opened up to transnational capital.

Using economic levers recommended – or imposed – by the IMF and USAID, the Honduran state, then, uprooted peasants from the land to an extent hitherto unseen in the country. As such, the process of land reform that had proceeded with more or less energy since the 1950s ground to a halt in the 1980s and was formally terminated in 1992 when the Callejas government passed the *Ley de Modernización Agrícola.* Drafted in consultation with USAID and the World Bank, the agricultural 'modernization' law reversed land reform and facilitated the transfer of land into private, commercial hands. The state body responsible for land reform, the Instituto Nacional Agraria (INA), was made largely redundant and lost its autonomy, effectively ending state intervention and expropriation of land, while the new package of laws strengthened private property rights

and converted all titled land into marketable property. Cooperative lands were converted into individual parcels, which gave powerful oligarchs greater opportunities to buy up formerly cooperative lands, as the state withdrew most of its support for *campesinos*, especially in the privatization of the National Agriculture Development Bank (BANDESA), the sell off of – and subsequent rate increases for – state infrastructure like grain storage facilities, and the concurrent abandonment of low-interest loans for peasant farmers, all of which served to leave individual families and cooperatives so desperate for cash that they sold their land for infinitely less than its market value. The Lourdes Sugar Cooperative, for instance, sold for 3 million lempiras in July 1991, though its book value was estimated at L30 million.[397] The *Ley de Modernización Agrícola*, then, represented a thorough overhaul of the land system in Honduras and ensured that there would be no further toleration of non-capitalist *campesino* land cooperatives.

The result, not surprisingly, has been a dramatic migration from rural to urban areas, a shift from self-sufficient non-capitalist agricultural production to dependence on waged labour, and intensified competition for existing wage work leading to decreases in those wages. It was an all-out assault on Honduras' poor and the effects were dramatic. Between 1990-1992, per capita income plummeted by more than half, dropping from $534 U.S. to $204 U.S. in that time.[398] All the while, prices continued to rise, and by 2003, over 75% of Hondurans lived in poverty and could not meet their basic daily needs.[399] Environmental destruction that had increased under the U.S. occupation was exacerbated by the neoliberal adjustments of the 1990s, and deforestation and soil erosion continued, making the effects of Hurricane Mitch in 1998 particularly devastating; some

[397] Schultz and Schultz, 298-303.
[398] Woodward, 273.
[399] Pine, 4.

11,000 Hondurans were killed and as many as 2 million people – almost one third of the population – were left without homes.[400] Not surprisingly, many of these people were the suburban poor; former peasants who had been forced by neoliberal policies to move to the cities to find work. The storm devastated the hillsides surrounding Tegucigalpa where so many of the new migrants had set up flimsy shantytown dwellings on recently deforested areas; the vulnerable soil was easily washed away, wiping out homes and ruining crops.[401] Agriculture was devastated and, all told, the storm did upwards of $4 billion U.S. in damage.

THE INTENSIFICATION OF POVERTY AND VIOLENCE

Indeed, Hurricane Mitch can be understood as a kind of litmus test for the neoliberal transition; its utterly devastating effects and the social and economic mess that it left in its wake was as clear an indication as any that the neoliberal project had created a nightmare for poor Hondurans who, in part as a result of that very project, made up an overwhelming majority. The already endemic poverty of the 1990s was deepened by the storm's destruction, which fell hardest on those who could least afford it, and the perception of the hurricane as having 'punished' people who were already so poor sent already-impoverished communities into a tailspin of violent crime;[402] murder rates in

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[400] Booth, Wade and Walker, 171.

[401] Booth, Wade and Walker, 171.

[402] Adrienne Pine's 2008 book *Working Hard, Drinking Hard* makes an attempt at describing the process of creating Honduran subjectivities in the context of a daily life that is, for most Hondurans, regularly punctuated by hyper violence. She goes to great lengths to describe the ways that Hondurans are encouraged to blame the victims of violence – physical, social, and economic – rather than the perpetrators, which has reinforced a kind of shame and self-flagellation. I am not entirely convinced by Pine's methodology and tone in this study, which I think is characterized by a tendency to draw sweeping generalizations about a supposed national subjectivity from limited and somewhat anecdotal evidence, which would have been unmistakably influenced by her own presence amongst 'her subjects.' Indeed, conversations with activists – Honduran and international – who have spent many long years in the country indicate that there is much evidence to dispute Pine's broad claims about Honduran subjectivity. That said, the book does contain a good deal of useful insight into a series of contemporary Honduran experiences and quite convincingly demonstrates that part of the class project of the Honduran elite has been to criminalize

Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula had risen, by the year 2000, to make Honduras one of the most violent countries in the Western Hemisphere.[403] The increases in violence were often linked to street gangs, or *maras*, themselves sometimes (though not always) connected to narco-trafficking; by the turn of the century, there were an estimated 500 *maras* in the country with some 100,000 members, mostly drawn from Honduras' urban poor.[404] Gang violence became a central theme of the 2001 elections and the winner, Ricardo Maduro, won on a platform that promised to fight a 'War on Crime,' which would only exacerbate the already-bad situation.

In the period between Hurricane Mitch and the election of Maduro, Honduras experienced a spate of extrajudicial killings of children, almost all of them boys who appeared to have connections to the *maras*. The killings were carried out by vigilante groups, usually made up of off-duty police or ex-paramilitaries, who patrolled poor neighbourhoods, shooting youths who had tattoos or wore clothing that fit into the stereotypical image of gang members which, not surprisingly, was closely linked to the image of the urban poor.[405] Between 1998-2002, somewhere between 1500 and 4500 youths were killed without any legal process, neither an investigation connecting them to criminal activity in the first place nor a juridical hearing sentencing them to any kind of punishment. The cause for the discrepancy in numbers was the difficulty faced by organizations trying to document the killings.[406] Few attempts were made to even investigate the killings which took place with the tacit approval of the state and the

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and individualize poverty, just as its policies have been imposing that poverty on people at ever greater levels. On the responses to Hurricane Mitch, see Pine, 89.

[403] Booth, Wade and Walker, 172.

[404] Booth, Wade and Walker, 172-173.

[405] Pine, 58.

[406] Casa Alianza came up with 1569, while groups associated with the Catholic Church estimated over 4500. Virginia Samayoa, 241.

mainstream media, by this point largely owned and controlled by the Honduran oligarchy. Ministers in the Flores government criticized the "irresponsible parenting" of street children and repeated sensationalized stories of youths who raped their mothers – fabrications dreamt up by corporate tabloid journalists who contribute to the victim-blaming process – in order to focus attention on the supposed criminality of the youths, rather than the extraordinary extension of impunity to vigilantes who were committing murder.[407]

Despite a special U.N. report that highlighted both the social and economic causes of the growth of *maras*, and the fact that vigilante assassinations of street youth only deepened the violent crisis in Honduras, President Maduro launched his 'War on Crime' with the emphasis entirely on a militarized crackdown on criminals rather than any effort to reverse the neoliberal project that was producing such dramatic inequality and poverty.[408] Initially, while violence had been largely kept within poor communities, there was rarely cause for notice from the state, beyond campaign rhetoric. But as crime increasingly targeted prominent businessmen and officials, *maquiladora* owners began relocating out of Honduras and crime became a primary state concern; once again, the needs of foreign capital figured prominently in the actions of the Honduran state.[409] The Maduro administration and the corporate media encouraged Hondurans to both fear and police one another; criminality was constructed as a 'traditional' characteristic of the poor and, by stressing this 'innate' criminal nature of poor people, poverty and violence were ideologically connected such that the causal chain – i.e. that the violence of poverty encourages other forms of violence – could be reversed to suggest that poverty was a

[407] Pine, 60.
[408] Virginia Samayoa, 220.
[409] Booth, Wade and Walker, 172-173.

result of a criminal nature.[410] The victims of neoliberal structural violence, then, were to be blamed for their own poverty. Adrienne Pine describes the link between neoliberal capitalist authority and the construction of the 'dangerous' poor:

> Only through…'security,' Maduro argued, can private property (and hence capitalist civilization) be protected. Though officially at peace, daily violence and its representations in Honduras have created a culture of terror, which, like all wars, defines the nation in terms of its common enemy – in this case, itself. Hondurans are not irrational. But the War on Crime, combined with the antipoor rhetoric and practices of modern capitalist institutions, has engineered an amazing coup over humanism… while rich and poor alike share the reasoning behind the justification for genocide, it is primarily the poor who are harmed.[411]

Legislation introduced in Maduro's *Ley Antimara* strengthened the powers of the military and police to deal with suspected gang members, establishing laws that could sentence gang members to up to twenty years of incarceration and empowering the armed forces to patrol the slums in much the same way that the vigilantes had been doing for years.[412] It put some 10,000 new police and military officers in the streets, made the armed forces 'untouchable,' describing an attack against an officer as an attack 'against Honduras,' and extended the powers of the police to arrest, question, and detain people on suspicion alone.[413] Notably, U.S. authorities applauded Maduro's 'zero tolerance' policies especially as he linked them to the dubious threat that Al-Qaeda was organizing in Honduras;[414] Colin Powell commended Maduro's efforts while thanking him for sending troops to assist in the U.S. occupation of Iraq, despite the fact that *Cero*

[410] Pine, 60-63.
[411] Pine, 82.
[412] Pine, 63.
[413] Booth, Wade and Walker, 173.
[414] Virginia Samayoa, 242.

Tolerancia had only amplified the violence that plagued Honduras.[415] Indeed, the lawlessness of the legal authorities was such that when two deadly fires broke out at Honduran prisons in 2003 and 2004, over 170 'suspected gang members' were killed, though dozens had only been imprisoned for 'illicit association' and dozens more had been changed with no crime whatsoever.[416] These fires, part of what some observers have described as an 'invisible genocide' against Honduras' poor, were to be reflected in an even more horrific prison fire in 2011 that claimed the lives of over 360 people, many of whom had been similarly detained without any legal process as part of the crackdown against the coup resistance[417] (more on this in chapter 5.) The assassinations of youth also continued under Maduro, at an average rate of sixty killings per month in 2003.[418]

As for the gangs themselves, their numbers were only increased by the extrajudicial killings and Maduro's offensive, which made Honduras a more dangerous place for young males, pushing many more youths into groups like the *Mara Salvatrucha* and the *Mara 18* which seemed to offer some protection from the myriad forms of violence that beset Hondurans on a daily basis. Adrienne Pine observes, quite astutely, that "while it is important not to romanticize gang solidarity, over the past two decades, gangs have provided one of the few spheres in which poor young Hondurans have had an opportunity to construct a defiant, positive, class-based self-image," significant in a society where poverty is being cast as criminal and reflective of innate inferiority.[419] Given these conditions, it is not surprising that participation in gangs was widespread,

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[415] Pine, 196.
[416] Booth, Wade and Walker, 173.
[417] Jessica Isla, "A Chronicle of Hell, Women and Hope," *The Americas Program*, March 12, 2012. Available at http://www.cipamericas.org/archives/6550 .
[418] Pine, 198.
[419] Pine, 195.

despite the violence that it, too, entailed. Bolstered in numbers, the *maras* fought back against Maduro's *mano dura*, as in 2004 when a bus was bombed in San Pedro Sula in retaliation for the possible re-imposition of the death penalty.[420] Real violence and perceived violence reinforced one another in a feedback loop that saw Honduras become one of the most dangerous places in the Western Hemisphere. By 2006, the homicide rate in Honduras hovered around 46.2 per 100,000 and Maduro's 'War on Crime' had only aggravated the problem, which was compounded by an increase in the use of private security forces, which were even less responsible to civilian authorities than the regular armed forces. In the mid-2000s, state violence against members of street gangs became even less effective as it failed to recognize that the *maras* had been largely incorporated into the broader narco-trafficking circuits, themselves closely affiliated with corrupt state institutions; as much as 30% of the Honduran police participated and profited from the drug trade[421] and armed forces Gen. Romeo Vasquez was himself implicated with the cartels.[422]

The deepening of poverty created by the introduction of neoliberalism and the devastation of Hurricane Mitch led to an expansion of physical violence – both in terms of the growth of *maras* and vigilante death squad activity – that had its roots in the violence carried out in the 1980s, and was intricately connected to Honduras' full incorporation into neoliberal capitalist globalization, oriented as it is to benefit the few – mostly in the Global North – at the expense of the many. This polarization of wealth also

[420] That promise would be emphasized as part of the Presidential campaign of Porfirio 'Pepe' Lobo in 2005, who would lose the election to Manuel Zelaya, but was elected in the fraudulent coup-sponsored elections of 2009. Booth, Wade and Walker, 173.
[421] Booth, Wade and Walker, 175.
[422] Al Giordano, "Honduras Coup General Was Charged in 1993 Auto Theft Ring," *The Narco News*, July 4, 2009.

expanded the scope of structural, social, and economic violence, which was inflicted on Honduras' poor in the slums, the factories, and the fields. Adrienne Pine's work on the *maquiladora* industry provides very useful first-hand accounts of the experiences of the mostly women workers in the sector. The violence that is meted out by this type of work is not always easy to capture. As Pine describes, the factories rarely look the part of the Global North perception of the sweatshop:

> Workplace violence...is hard to see in a snapshot moment. The kinds of visceral horrors conjured up by anti-sweatshop campaigns (dingy back-room workplaces, disgusting toilets, violent physical abuse, and child and coerced labour) are the exception rather than the rule in Honduran maquilas... the complaints most workers have voiced to me have more to do with things less evident on first inspection: the chemicals used in production (formaldehyde and others), the lint particles (*tamo*)...the aches and boredom associated with repetitive tasks, and the unrelenting discipline – and associated humiliation – of factory work.[423]

These less-obvious forms of violence are such that it is easier for factory owners to convince casual observers that they are providing safe, decent work for people, while the reality is still quite different.

Waged labour – and especially capitalist factory work – imposes a whole host of different forms of alienation, which have been well documented in the Marxist tradition;[424] *maquiladoras* in Honduras, emblematic of the neoliberal era, offer a variety

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[423] Pine, 157.

[424] Marx, himself, offers some of the best descriptions of alienation under capitalist wage labour, in its many facets. In one vivid description, on the introduction of machinery to the factory, Marx writes: "In handicrafts and manufacture, the worker makes use of the tool; in the factory, the machine makes use of him. There, the movements of the instrument of labour proceed from him, here it is the movements of the machine that he must follow. In manufacture, the workers are the parts of a living mechanism. In the factory we have a lifeless mechanism, which is independent of the workers, who are incorporated into it as its living appendages. 'The wearisome routine of endless drudgery in which the same mechanical process is ever repeated, is like the torture of Sisyphus; the burden of toil, like the rock, is ever falling back upon the worn-out drudge.' Factory work exhausts the nervous system to the uttermost; at the same time, it does

of additional forms of violence and alienation. Workers get sick frequently, whether from the chemicals or the physical work, medical care is limited and inadequate, and workers are routinely forced to work through the sicknesses while waiting for care, making the problems that much worse. As Pine puts it, "the poor become sicker as a result of their poverty, and their sickness is often exacerbated by the kind of treatment poor bodies receive."[425] Meanwhile, the factories are a space where capital can more directly regulate women's bodies; since employers are legally obligated to pay maternity leave, the workplace is structured to be hostile to women who get pregnant. Female workers, who typically make up over 80% of the workforce, are routinely subjected to pregnancy tests during 'probation periods;' the probation allows employers to pay less to workers in that stage and it allows them to choose not to hire women who become pregnant.[426] The workplaces, themselves, are typically segregated along gendered and racial lines, highlighting difference between workers in order to discourage organization among them, and – as in *maquiladora* sectors across Latin America – the unions that represent workers are often directly or indirectly employed by the factory-owners and serve to undermine, rather than protect, the workers.[427]

All the while, Maduro sought to intensify the neoliberal apparatus upon which the new Honduras was constructed. In consultation with the IMF, he proceeded with the dismantling of social funding and state-run enterprises, pushing a number of new privatization schemes and reducing the workforce in the state bureaucracy.[428] With

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away with the many-sided play of the muscles, and confiscates every atom of freedom, both in bodily and intellectual activity." Marx, 548.
[425] Pine, 159.
[426] Pine, 164.
[427] Pine, 173.
[428] Booth, Wade and Walker, 173.

conditions getting worse in Honduras, many workers sought relief by plugging into the vast migratory networks that saw workers from Central America moving north – with or without papers – to work in the United States and Canada. Exploitation of these workers is well documented elsewhere and is largely outside the scope of this project,[429] though I will return to the dynamics of migration in chapter 6. Suffice it to say, here, that the worsening situation in Honduras produced a growing supply of cheap migrant labour in North America and remittances sent back by those workers became an increasingly crucial source of income for many Honduran families; according to Booth and Walker, remittances grew from $400 million in 2000 to $1.8 billion in 2006 and reached $2.7 billion by 2008, accounting for 20% of Honduras' GDP and acting as a lifeline for some 20% of Honduran families who were only spared from extreme poverty by the remittance money they received.[430]

Nonetheless, despite the mounting difficulties facing all but the wealthiest Hondurans, there continued to be strength in the organizations committed to resisting colonial and class domination. The 1980s had been a decade of rupture; the movements that had been building from the strikes of the 1950s to the peasant movements of the 1970s were largely squashed by the repressive apparatus of the 1980s. But new movements were built out of the difficulties of that period – often in response to the violence ushered in by the U.S. occupation – and they continued to resist imperial impositions in the form of neoliberal restructuring by a comprador elite through the

[429] Mike Davis and Justin Akers Chacon offer an excellent starting point on these issues in Mike Davis and Justin Akers Chacon, *No One Is Illegal: Fighting Racism and State Violence on the U.S.-Mexico Border*, Haymarket Books, Chicago, 2006. I also address these problems, with some emphasis on the situation in Honduras, in light of the deaths of several Peruvian migrant workers in Ontario in 2012 in Tyler Shipley, "Peruvian Lives on Canada's Conscience," *Rabble.ca*, Feb 10, 2012.
[430] Booth, Wade and Walker, 174-175.

1990s and 2000s. These movements will be discussed in greater detail in the chapters to follow; for the moment, it will suffice to highlight a few developments in different sectors.

With respect to the ongoing death squad activities and related forms of state violence, organizations like the Human Rights Committee of Honduras (CODEH) and the Committee of the Families of the Disappeared and Detained in Honduras (COFADEH) emerged out of the repression of the 1980s and became important participants in contemporary struggles. *Maquiladora* workers increasingly engaged in acts of individual and organized resistance, ranging from sabotage and stealing to union drives and demonstrations, often bringing well-developed feminist networks into the sphere of production to fight against both capitalist exploitation and the complicated gendered dynamics that help sustain it.[431] Urban professional classes, civil servants, and trade unionists became increasingly defiant in the 2000s in the face of privatization and the dismantling of social services, leading protests of some 25,000 people in 2003 in response to Maduro's plans to privatize water.[432] Peasant movements, undeterred by the violence brought upon them, continued to demand access to land, organizing massive land re-occupations throughout the 1980s and 1990s, not least of which was a movement of some 100,000 peasants in the northwest in 1987.[433] Although proletarianization weakened the peasant movement, *campesino* groups increasingly moved to organize alongside workers in other sectors, Indigenous and Garífuna groups,[434] women's

[431] Pine, 176-178.
[432] Booth, Wade and Walker, 173.
[433] Robinson, 132.
[434] The Garífuna's ancestors arrived in the Caribbean on a slave ship that was wrecked and now live primarily along Honduras's North Coast as a culturally distinct, often communally organized set of communities. UNESCO has declared their culture one of 19 "Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity."

organizations, and other resistance networks; in 1989 many of these groups came together to form the *Plataforma de Lucha Hondureña* – the Platform of Struggle – and, later, *Cansejo Cívico de Organizaciones Populares y Indígenas de Honduras* (COPINH) – the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras. These types of broader cooperative networks were to be an important legacy of the organizing that took place in response to the neoliberal push; as the capitalist class pooled its resources to get behind a common class project, so, too, subordinate classes had to build movements that would cut across many traditional divides. The joining of many of these struggles would, ultimately, be the strength of the resistance networks in the 1990s and 2000s and, especially, in the coalition that came together aftermath of the June 2009 coup.

CHAPTER FIVE – CONTEMPORARY HONDURAS AND THE 2009 COUP

This chapter will focus its attention on the June 2009 coup itself – with an eye to its violent and anti-democratic nature – in order to set the context for Canada's response to the coup, which will be detailed in Chapter 6. Having established that imperialism can take a variety of forms, and that many of those different forms have been manifest during the over five hundred years of foreign intervention in Honduras, it remains to connect the dots between the new Canadian imperialism, in general, and the coup in Honduras, in particular. Thus, the purpose of the following chapter will be to demonstrate first: that the June 2009 coup was anti-democratic and that it unleashed a dramatic decline in the already deplorable conditions of life – in terms of economic, political, social, cultural, and physical well-being – for the overwhelming majority of Hondurans; and second: that the coup was a violent response to a growing and credible threat from popular social movements to the current imperial capitalist order in that country.

Establishing these two points will be a crucial piece of understanding Canada's reaction to – and support for – the coup d'etat as something that cannot be explained by Canada's typical discourse which claims to pursue a foreign policy that seeks progressive development in the Global South. These next two chapters form, then, a key piece of the central argument of this dissertation; if the coup served to *undermine* democracy, human rights and social justice in Honduras, and Canada threw its full support behind that process, then something else must be driving Canadian policy, the details of which will be the subject of Chapter 7.

MANUEL ZELAYA AND THE CNRP

One of the more interesting and perhaps unforeseen consequences of the June 28, 2009 coup was the way that it *transformed* Manuel Zelaya into a popular figure in

Honduras. He was elected President in 2005 as a member of the Liberal Party which, as Chapter 4 described, has traditionally functioned – along with the National Party – as one of the two competing parties of the oligarchy, neither known for any history of radicalism. Zelaya, himself, was a junior-member of the oligarchy, a wealthy landowner from the eastern department of Olancho whose father, José Manuel, was implicated in the murder of two Catholic priests who were supporting escalations of *campesino* activism in 1975. The *Los Horcones* massacre, as discussed in Chapter 4, is often held up as an example of how Honduras was different from other Central American countries because some of the military officers involved in the incident were tried and imprisoned for their participation. Nevertheless, there was still widespread impunity for such crimes; José Manuel, himself, avoided any culpability in the massacre, and his son's political career was not held up in the slightest.

Nor, initially, did that career show any signs of significant divergence from the standard trajectory of Honduran politics. In fact, the only thing that separated Manuel Zelaya from someone like Roberto Micheletti – the tremendously unpopular figure who emerged as *de facto* President after the coup – was that he recognized the growing strength of the movements for social reform and learned to work with them. Zelaya's presidency became increasingly responsive – at least in relative terms – to the sharp demands from trade unions, *campesinos*, women, Indigenous and Garífuna and other marginalized communities for change. But, in spite of the way that he was later characterized by many observers – from a variety of political stripes – Zelaya was not a hero to Honduras' poor; his Presidency and his role in the social movement are, instead, complicated and inconsistent and need to be carefully unpacked.

After winning an exceptionally narrow margin in the 2005 elections, Zelaya was immediately subjected to a show of strength and defiance from many of those who had supported his campaign, facing some two hundred protests in just his first year in office.[435] These strikes and mobilizations did not materialize out of thin air, nor were they spontaneous expressions of discontent; they were a manifestation of the growing strength of the new social movements that had begun to coalesce in the late 1980s and 1990s, as presented in Chapter 4. The militarization of Honduras under the U.S. occupation in the 1980s, and the repression and death-squad activity that accompanied it, significantly weakened or even snuffed out much of the radical Left and the impressive *campesino* organizing that had characterized the period from the 1950s-1970s. As a result, there was limited capacity to muster up opposition to the imposition of neoliberalism in the 1990s, especially as the Callejas government was setting up alternative parallel structures to existing social organizations in order to weaken and divide the movement. So the hammer of structural adjustment, privatizations, foreign concessions, theft of *campesino* and Indigenous land, cuts to social and state services and infrastructure, and other austerity measures fell hard on Hondurans who were already reeling from the violence and insecurity of the 1980s. The devastating social consequences of Hurricane Mitch in 1998 were as clear a signal as any that conditions in Honduras had become intolerable.

It is no surprise, then, that it was around this time that a new generation of social movements was beginning to consolidate itself, first in regional organizations based loosely around the different departments, or provinces, of the country. These included, but were not limited to: the *Asamblea Popular Permanente* (APP) in El Progreso, the

[435] "Rocky First Year for Zelaya," *Central American Report*, February 16, 2007.

Movimiento Ambientalista de Olancho (MAO) in Olancho, *Coordinadora de Organizaciones Populares de Valle Aguán* (COPA) in Atlántida, *Patronato Regional de Occidente* (PRO) in the west, *Cansejo Cívico de Organizaciones Populares y Indígenas de Honduras* (COPINH) in Intibucá and the *Bloque Popular* in Tegucigalpa and the southern departments. Most of these groups were, themselves, unions of smaller organizations that had been coming together around particular issues and gradually connecting up with larger pockets of struggle. For instance, the *Bloque Popular* – one of the key groups – was "a union of unions, anti-poverty groups, and *juntas de agua,*" activist networks organized around the protection of public access to clean water, and it also encompassed a number of small socialist and communist parties, including the *Movimiento Democrática Popular*, a Marxist-Leninist party, the *Tendencia Revolucionario*, made up of disaffected and increasingly radicalized government workers, and *Los Necios*, a Marxist student organization that continues to have an important presence in the Resistance.[436]

The larger regional groups, like the *Bloque Popular* and COPINH, began linking up in the late 1990s and organized coordinated actions in the early 2000s, including a dramatic blockade of the four main highways into Tegucigalpa in 2003. The blockade was held from 4am until 2pm, at which point it proceeded to the National Congress to confront then-President Maduro directly; the success of this demonstration encouraged further cooperation, and thus was created the *Coordinadora Nacional de Resistencia Popular* (CNRP). Ultimately, this structure would be converted into the *Frente Nacional de Resistencia Popular* (FNRP) shortly after the June 28 coup. The CNRP rotated its leadership between its different member groups, and I interviewed Juan Barahona, who

[436] Interview with Gilberto Rios, May 8, 2012.

was the coordinator of the *Bloque Popular* and became one of the central leaders of the FNRP after the coup. "The social movement was not born with the coup," he explained, "but strengthened by it. We had been mobilized for a decade, we had fought against Mel Zelaya for two years."[437]

Indeed, Zelaya's inauguration as President in 2006 was met – just a few months later – by one of Honduras' largest pre-coup demonstrations; thousands of people participated in a national strike, led by the teachers' unions, that shut down many of the country's major highways and was met by swift and violent repression from Zelaya's government which, according to *Los Necios'* Gilberto Rios, only further emboldened the CNRP to redouble its pressure against Zelaya.[438] A few months later, in May 2006, Zelaya reached out to the CNRP in an effort to bring the wave of strikes to an end and to ask for CNRP support in his plan to join the Venezuelan-led alliance *Alternativa Bolivariana para los pueblos de nuestra América* (ALBA) in order to participate in the PetroCaribe project to significantly reduce energy costs.[439] While this ended the strike in question, it did little to satisfy the growing demands for change from the increasingly well-organized and active movements that had emerged from the wreckage of the 1990s.

The reforms pursued by Zelaya's government, then, were concessions made in order to appease the growing social movements; it would be wrong to give complete credit for them to Zelaya, but similarly inaccurate to understate the significance of these reforms and his shift to the Left. While there is a tendency in some progressive circles to cast Zelaya as a canny opportunist who switched sides and took on the role of the

[437] Interview with Juan Barahona, May 10, 2012.
[438] Interview with Gilberto Rios, May 8, 2012.
[439] Launched by the Venezuelan government in 2005, PetroCaribe offers member countries the option of purchasing Venezuelan oil for reduced prices and with long-term payment options at low interest rates.

populist hero when he ran afoul of the oligarchy and was deposed in the 2009 coup, this reading is oversimplistic.[440] Though Zelaya began as a traditional politician who emerged at the height of the neoliberal push, his presidency was markedly different from the outset because, as Honduran sociologist Tomás Andino explained to me, Zelaya came from a fraction of the Honduran oligarchy – the traditional landowning classes – that was being left behind by the embrace of neoliberalism and transnational capital.[441] This is a piece often missed, even in progressive accounts of the coup, and helps to build a more complete picture of the dynamics that led to the 2009 coup.

As discussed in Chapter 4, the structural adjustment policies imposed in the 1990s had the effect of attracting more foreign capital and re-orienting the Honduran economy towards the production of exports, especially in industrial manufacturing. In addition, Hurricane Mitch in 1998 hit the traditional landowner sector – of which Zelaya was a part – much harder than the growing *maquiladora* sector. According to Andino, Zelaya came to represent a disaffected section within the oligarchy that was less connected to foreign capital and was not reaping the rewards of neoliberalism in the same way, especially under the government of Ricardo Maduro.[442] As such, when Zelaya succeeded Maduro, he quickly established an administration that had different priorities and, importantly, his separation from the most powerful elements of the Honduran oligarchy meant that he needed to cultivate relationships with other elements of Honduran society. This would

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[440] This is perhaps the most extreme version of that critique, but it nevertheless reflects the spirit of many of the Left critiques of Zelaya, which, although not altogether unfounded, represent an unhelpful oversimplification of the dynamics at play. One example of this position can be found in Todd Gordon and Jeffrey R. Webber, "Imperialism and the Future of the Honduran Resistance," *The Bullet*, No. 524, July 6, 2011. I offer a response to that position in Tyler Shipley, "Harper in Honduras: Left Solidarity and the Future of Coup Resistance," *The Bullet*, No. 538, August 25, 2011.
[441] Interview with Tomás Andino, May 9, 2012.
[442] Interview with Tomás Andino, May 9, 2012.

prove to be of critical importance because it explains Zelaya's openness to building a less oppositional relationship with the social movements that had coalesced into the CNRP.

Consequently, Zelaya's Presidency was pulled – albeit gradually and inconsistently – toward the social movements, and that shift is reflected in the series of reforms it enacted. One of these reforms, an increase of approximately 60% in the monthly minimum wage from the equivalent of $157 to $289, was to provide some immediate, if inadequate, relief for Honduras' poorest workers in the non-*maquiladora* sectors.[443] Under pressure from trade unions and the CNRP, Zelaya imposed the wage increase by decree when the Honduran Congress refused to cooperate and, not surprisingly, the move elicited an angry response from the oligarchy and most of the larger media outlets they possess – a point to which I will return – not to mention those foreign companies that do not fall under *maquiladora* laws, including the infamous banana plantations and mining companies. The exemption for *maquiladora* zones is, of course, part of the broader capitulation of the Honduran state to foreign capital, but it is also worth noting that *maquiladora* workers are generally better paid than average working class Hondurans, so the wage increase was still targeted to assist some of Honduras' poorest people.[444]

Closely related were a series of reforms designed to reduce the overall cost of living for Honduras' poor and working classes. Zelaya's move towards ALBA, though often read in the North American media as part of a nefarious pact with Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez, is better understood as a policy option that would allow him to

[443] Thelma Mejía, "Minimum Wage Increase Bad For Economy," *Honduras News*, January 6, 2009. The decree was passed on Dec. 23, 2008 and went into effect on Jan 1, 2009. Pepe Lobo's government has taken steps to repeal some of the increase but has not been able to push the minimum wage back down to 2008 levels. It has, however, refused to give increases in 2010 and 2011 above the rate of inflation.
[444] Pine, 135-191.

make good on promises to improve conditions for Honduras' poorest communities, upon whose support his political position was increasingly reliant. After all, Zelaya's re-alignment towards ALBA included signing onto the PetroCaribe initiative – of which an overwhelming majority of Central American and Caribbean countries are participants – under which Venezuela provides oil and gas to those countries at 40% of market price on a 25-year financing plan at just 1% interest. This decision had immediate benefits for Hondurans, in terms of lower energy costs, but of course it also made life easier for the Honduran oligarchy whose businesses were much more reliant on energy than the average household, which may explain why the same people who later accused Zelaya of being a puppet of Chávez were actually rather supportive of the initiative when it was introduced.[445] Nevertheless, Zelaya also used the $100 million in Honduran bonds purchased by Venezuela to lower the rate that low-income families paid in energy costs, to reduce interest rates on housing, and to provide subsidies for single mothers, for equipment for small farmers, and for meals in schools across the country.[446]

These initiatives were complemented by a plan to convert sections of the U.S./Honduran military base at Palmerola into a commercial airport to reduce Hondurans' reliance on Toncontín airport in Tegucigalpa, long recognized as one of the

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[445] Miguel Cáceres Rivera, "Carta a un amigo hondureño que está lejos," *El Mercurio*, July 4, 2009.

[446] Joaquín A. Mejía, Victor Fernández, and Omar Menjívar, *Aspectos históricos, conceptuales y sustanciales sobre el proceso Constityente en Honduras*, Movimiento Amplio por la Dignidad y la Justicia, Tegucigalpa, 2009, p. 22. It is worth noting, briefly, that accusations of corruption made by the oligarchy against the Zelaya government often hinge around his relations with Venezuela. In particular, the claim is that Zelaya was using Venezuelan money to support particular communities that backed him politically – extending loans and subsidies selectively to his allies. It would not be altogether shocking if there were some truth in these claims; every government since the end of the military dictatorship has been accused of varying levels of petty corruption. That said, the Truth Commission struck by the coup regime to whitewash the coup in 2010 worked very hard to demonstrate that Zelaya's government was corrupt – as part of a broader project to legitimate the coup – and could only come up with rumours and hearsay, a point I will return to in Chapter 6. As such, it would not be a farfetched supposition that while there was some level of petty corruption in Zelaya's government, it was not at levels that would make it a significant factor for this analysis.

world's most dangerous international airports, given the complicated mountainous approach and short runways.[447] In legislation passed in 2007, Zelaya's government also took action to reduce the environmental consequences of deforestation by designating nearly 90% of Honduran territory to be protected against logging, and he resisted pressure from the oligarchy to privatize the state electrical company, *Empresa Nacional de Energía Eléctrica* (ENEE), and the national telecommunications firm, *Empresa Hondureña de Telecomunicaciones*, (HONDUTEL).[448] Though both enterprises have been mired in corruption for decades, the experience of privatizations in Honduras clearly indicates that handing those industries directly to the oligarchy would have only deepened the extent to which the wealth of the many would be diverted to the pockets of the few.

One of Zelaya's actions that bore much significance for Canadian capital – a point to which I will return in Chapter 6 – was his enforcement of a moratorium on the granting of new mining concessions to foreign firms. Like many of Zelaya's reformist positions, it had contradictory impulses, at once designed as a gesture to appease the social movements and, as per Tomás Andino's analysis above, as a wedge against the dominant transnational capitalists in favour of his own fraction of the Honduran oligarchy. Nevertheless, it was a significant step, and it cannot be considered apart from the pressure Zelaya was facing from the CNRP in the context of social and environmental crises

[447] In 2010, a program on the U.S. television station, *History Channel*, ranked it the second most dangerous airport in the world. In addition to being tucked into a valley among steep mountainous terrain, the two runways at Toncontín are among the shortest at international airports in the world. After these dangerous conditions led to the crash of Taca Flight 390, which overran the runway and careened into city streets in 2008, Zelaya suspended all large aircraft landings and announced plans to divert air traffic to the Soto Cano Air Base at Palmerola, jointly run by the Honduran and U.S. militaries. Zelaya's efforts were consistently blocked and interpreted as an attack on U.S. regional military power, and it is no small irony that when he was deposed in 2009, the first stop was Soto Cano. Plans for the diversion of air traffic away from Toncontín were scrapped after the coup.

[448] "Honduras Politics: Mixed Report Card for Zelaya," *Economist Intelligence Unit*, London, 2009.

caused by mining operations, notable among them the San Martín mine in Valle de Siria, owned by the Canadian firm Goldcorp. Pedro Landa, of the anti-mining organization *Centro Hondureño de Promoción para el Desarrollo Comunitario* (CEHPRODEC), recalled that the moratorium was actually first imposed in August 2004, when upwards of 4000 anti-mining activists converged on Tegucigalpa in a 7-day "*Marcha por la Vida*" and then-President Maduro decreed a temporary suspension of approvals of new mining concessions, to take effect at the end of 2005 when his term would be over. Zelaya thus inherited the moratorium and had 30 days to approve it, otherwise all outstanding concessions would have been granted – a canny move on Maduro's part that forced Zelaya to take a strong position one way or the other.[449] CNRP-affiliated anti-mining groups like CEHPRODEC held meetings with Zelaya and convinced him to not only enforce Maduro's decree but, furthermore, to add that there could be no consideration of any additional concessions until such time as a new set of laws governing mining in Honduras could be written and approved. It is worth remembering that, while this was a step in the right direction, mines already in operation continued functioning unabated.[450] Nevertheless, since the new mining code was not prepared during Zelaya's term in office, the moratorium remained in effect until the coup.[451]

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[449] Interview with Pedro Landa, May 4, 2012.

[450] Harsha Walia, "Dissecting the Coup In Honduras," *The Georgia Straight*, July 6, 2009.

[451] Zelaya's government had, in fact, prepared a draft of a new mining code that included higher taxation of foreign mining companies, a ban on open-pit mining using toxic chemicals, and stricter requirements regarding community consultations. The draft was presented in May 2009, the month before the coup, and was scheduled for debate in Congress in August 2009, which, of course, was scrapped by the coup government. The post-coup Lobo government has attempted to bring forward its own new mining codes – with the full support and cooperation of Canadian authorities, who describe Zelaya's draft as "anti-mining" and Lobo's as "pro-sustainable mining" – which failed to enshrine any of the reforms Zelaya's draft had proposed, protecting instead the interests of foreign companies over Honduran workers and communities. At the time of writing, the social movement has still been able to apply enough pressure to stop it from passing, but there is no doubt that the Lobo government will try to get it passed as soon as politically possible. For more detail, see Jennifer Moore, "Canada's Subsidies to the Mining Industry Don't Stop at Foreign Aid," *Mining Watch Canada*, June 2012.

In another significant move, in May 2009 Zelaya applied a Presidential veto on a law, passed by the Honduran Congress a month earlier, which would have criminalized the use of the "morning-after pill" at the request of the ultra-conservative Christian movement.[452] The "morning-after pill" has taken on particular significance in Honduran feminist circles because, as Andrea Nuila, a lawyer with the group *Feministas en Resistencia* explained to me, "all forms of abortion are criminalized in Honduras," making the pill an important exception to the rule of careful regulation of female bodies by the state.[453] The proposed law was presented by a member of Zelaya's Liberal Party, Martha Lorena Alvarado, and was enthusiastically endorsed by John Smeaton, the director of the U.S. anti-abortion organization, Society for the Protection of Unborn Children.[454] Acknowledging that the President had the right to veto the bill, Smeaton encouraged his readers to write to Roberto Micheletti in his role as President of Congress to support its decision. Under pressure from Honduran and international feminist groups, notably the *Comité de América Latina y el Caribe para la Defensa de los Derechos de la Mujer* (CLADEM), Zelaya vetoed the bill after it was passed in Congress. When, just over a month later, his government was overthrown, the coup government waited only one day to pass a bill into law that banned the pill and the two congresswomen who introduced the law in the first place were promoted to high-ranking positions in the military government.[455]

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[452] "Congress in Honduras prohibits abortion pill," *Catholic News Agency*, April 7, 2009.
[453] Interview with Andrea Nuila, May 4, 2012.
[454] John Smeaton, "Honduras votes to ban abortion-inducing morning-after pill," *Society For The Protection of Unborn Children*, April 10, 2009.
[455] Katherine Ronderos, "Poverty Reduction, Political Violence and Women's Rights in Honduras," *Community Development Journal*, June 9, 2011. Martha Lorena Alvadaro was given the post of Deputy Secretary of State. See Adriana Maestas, "Women's Rights and Reproductive Freedoms Under Attack With Honduran Coup," *Latino Politics Blog,* November 16, 2009.

ZELAYA AND THE CONSTITUYENTE

By far the most significant initiative taken by Zelaya's increasingly reform-oriented government was its decision to support the social movements' call for striking a constituent assembly to consider re-writing the Honduran constitution along more equitable lines. Indeed, it is no coincidence that this was the project that ultimately provoked the full, militarized, ire of the Honduran oligarchy. The push for constitutional reform came out of the determination, on the part of leading activists in the struggle, that the existing legal structures in Honduras severely restricted the possibility of more significant reform. The present constitution was ratified in 1982, under the auspices of the U.S.-sponsored military dictatorship which was, at the time, presiding over a supposed transfer of power to elected civilian authorities, as detailed in Chapter 4. Gen. Policarpio Paz García, then-President of the dictatorship, saw in the growing unrest of the late 1970s an echo of the revolutionary movements that were growing in strength in Guatemala, El Salvador and especially Nicaragua. In an attempt to avoid a similar descent into civil war and upheaval, which might have weakened the position of the military, depending on its outcome, Paz García moved to return power to civilian leadership by calling for a constituent assembly in 1980, which set elections for 1981.[456]

Though the 1981 elections were free of direct military intervention, there can be little doubt that the process of developing the 1982 constitution was heavily influenced by the dictatorship that presided over it. As Chapter 4 highlighted, the 1980s could hardly be described as a success for civilian rule;[457] the country was nicknamed the

[456] Booth, Wade and Walker, 168-170.

[457] In fact, for what it's worth, Booth, Wade and Walker only locate the successful transition to civilian democracy in Honduras in 1996, after the police came fully under civilian control and the military was effectively placed under meaningful control by civilian government.

'U.S.S. Honduras' for its complete capitulation to the U.S. Contra Wars and was, for the first half of the decade, effectively ruled by Gen. Gustavo Alvarez Martínez and U.S. ambassador John Negroponte who, together, founded the Battalion 3-16 death squad. Meanwhile, civilian President Roberto Suazo Córdova attempted to amend the new constitution to stay in power after 1985, offering the military another opportunity to assert its power to stop him. In so doing, it established once again that it was by far the most powerful force in the country, bolstered by an average of approximately $50 million per year in U.S. military assistance from 1981-1988.[458]

This context framed the signing of the 1982 constitution and, as such, it is no surprise that it gained little by way of support from common Hondurans. In their important primer outlining the arguments in favour of convoking a constituent assembly, Joaquín A. Mejía, Victor Fernández, and Omar Menjívar argue that the 1982 constitution did not represent a legitimate social pact, explaining:

> In the [national constituent assembly] of 1980, not all sectors of Honduran society were represented, in fact, it was only for those located at the highest levels of political, economic, religious and military power in the country, and for that reason, our current constitution, instead of being a product of a genuine social pact, acts as an agreement between the military and the leaders of the traditional political parties with the objective of avoiding a real break from the past so that they can maintain their privileges, at whatever cost.[459]

They go on to argue that in the context of the late 1970s:

> the economic deterioration for the large majority and the rigid and repressive political control over the popular movements organized against the oligarchy, given the experience of

[458] Booth, Wade and Walker, 169.

[459] Joaquín A. Mejía, Victor Fernández, and Omar Menjívar, *Aspectos históricos, conceptuales y sustanciales sobre el proceso Constityente en Honduras*, Movimiento Amplio por la Dignidad y la Justicia, Tegucigalpa, 2009, p. 7-8. (Translated from Spanish. All translations by the author unless otherwise indicated.)

> [neighbouring Central American oligarchies], gave a new face to the political project of promoting an image of 'democratic' change in order to avoid, and legally disarticulate, that which was intended by the movements of popular and revolutionary struggle in the country. This strategy coincided perfectly with the manoeuvres of the United States to convert Honduras into the rearguard for its counterinsurgency war in Central America.[460]

Many in Honduras' social movements argue that the problem with the 1982 constitution lies not in the document itself, but in the manner it was written and the way it has been applied. In an interview in 2012, lawyer Jari Dixon explained to me:

> I don't think the 1982 constitution is a bad constitution. Most of it is good. It has respect for human rights, it respects the right to work, the right to education, respect for life, health, free association, freedom of thought – it's not a bad constitution. The real question is, why is it so ineffective? [...] There's no peace. There's no harmony. There's no health. There's no work. There's no education. There's no security. We are at the gateway to a failed state. So why doesn't the 1982 constitution work? A functioning rule of law is essential for the constitution to work. But the rule of law has been broken.[461]

Dixon worked in the public prosecutor's office for fourteen years under that constitution, believing he could improve society by pursuing cases and rigorously upholding the law. When he pursued a corruption case in Copán in 2004, he found himself at odds with his Attorney General, who had previously worked for President Callejas and was determined to eliminate any connections between Callejas and the corruption cases. Dixon and some colleagues were fired for pursuing the cases, and although he would be reinstated eventually, he insists that while the constitution itself is fine, the law is applied to the rich and the poor only selectively – that is, only when and how it suits the rich.[462]

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[460] Mejía, Fernández, and Menjívar, 19.
[461] Interview with Jari Dixon, May 10, 2012.
[462] Interview with Jari Dixon, May 10, 2012.

Others insist that the document itself is fundamentally flawed. As Bertha Cáceres of COPINH noted in a speech in 2009, "not one time are women mentioned in the constitution. How is that possible? How in a society where they talk of democracy and justice could women not even be mentioned?"[463] According to Miriam Miranda, coordinator of the *Organización Fraternal Negra Hondureña* (OFRANEH), "the poorest sectors of this country are included in the constitution only to go and vote," and Jorge Lara Fernández, a professor of sociology at the University of San Pedro Sula, added that, "poor Hondurans, women, Indigenous people, black Hondurans, people with different abilities, people with different sexual preferences are not included in our constitution."[464] Among the many things missing from the current legal apparatus in Honduras, Mejía, Fernández, and Menjívar point to the prospects, in a new constitution, for promoting "a new economic model" that would build genuine social equality and promote respect for human dignity and social, environmental and cultural rights.[465]

Both of these positions are partially right; Dixon is entirely correct to note that the capacity to enforce the rule of law has been massively damaged, and the movement activists who condemn the 1982 Constitution's omissions and shortcomings have identified real issues. What is clear is that a process of constitutional reform – navigating the debates between the different positions on the foundations of Honduran law – could have only been meaningful if it was undertaken democratically, developed by those whom it was meant to serve. Having the oligarchy re-fashion their management of

[463] Bertha Cáceres, "Speech in Gracias, Lempira" November 1, 2009. Transcript available at http://hondurasresists.blogspot.ca/2009/11/berta-caceres-we-only-have-one-option.html .
[464] Jorge Lara Fernández, quoted in Dawn Paley, "Towards Responsible Global Journalism: Transnational Theory, Foreign Reportage, and the 2009 Coup D'Etat in Honduras," Master of Journalism Thesis, Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of British Columbia, 2010, p. 62.
[465] Mejía, Fernández, and Menjívar, 47-74.

Honduras from the halls of Congress would have been nothing new; in fact, the mockery that Congress made of its own legal system in its attempts to block the *Constituyente* (more on this below) only emphasized just how corrupt and self-serving was Congress' use of that system and its constitution. As Mejía, Fernández, and Menjívar insist, the 2009 coup itself demonstrated that the 1982 constitution had changed nothing in Honduras, and had allowed successive governments to rule in the interests of the powerful with little regard for the well-being of the majority.[466] Honduran doctor and professor Rutilia Calderón described the importance of the project at length:

> From 1982 until now [the constitution] has never been invoked for the common good, for the good of the excluded sectors of this country. If we are therefore to give the Constitutional Reform process the characteristics of a social pact that will permit an inclusive society, real access to conditions of equality, in the eyes of the law and the justice system, then the *Constituyente* makes sense. But if it is only to become once again a measure for the powerful groups of the country to continue protecting their interests, under the delusion that the demands of the people will be attended to through elected representatives, then it will not be for the better. The construction of a reform process is not to produce a formal document called "The Constitution," it is to create new forms of relating between different sectors of society – to close the gap of inequality and to attain a just distribution of the wealth that this country has.[467]

Zelaya's support for a constitutional assembly – along the lines that Calderón describes above – generated a rupture with many of his remaining allies in the Liberal Party and represented an important victory for social movements that were finally beginning to make major gains after years of dedicated organizing work.

Zelaya's time in office, then, was complicated and contradictory; on the one hand, his own disaffection from the neoliberal project became linked – albeit uncomfortably –

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[466] Mejía, Fernández, and Menjívar, 9.
[467] Rutilia Calderon, quoted in Matt Schwartz, "Honduran Resistance Calls for Deepening of Democracy," November 10, 2009.

with the more substantial critiques of neoliberalism advanced with increasing fortitude by the social movements. On the other hand, the movements themselves were unsatisfied by the slow pace, inconsistent application, and often contradictory logic of Zelaya's reforms and, as a result, the second half of his administration was marked by both major strikes and protests *against* his government as well as significant demonstrations in *support* of proposals that Zelaya was endorsing against the wishes of his peers, especially the project for constitutional reform.[468] By 2008 and 2009, the lines of struggle had shifted such that the executive branch – Zelaya and his closest supporters – was just as likely to side with the movement against Congress and the Supreme Court as it was to side with the established legal institutions against the movement.

Indeed, frustrations with Honduras' legal structures had boiled over dramatically in April and May of 2008 when seven federal prosecutors staged a 38-day hunger strike in the Honduran Congress to protest the state's refusal to pursue corruption cases.[469] Jari Dixon was one of the prosecutors who participated in the hunger strike, as well as a three-day sit-in at Congress in January 2009, and after their efforts made little headway, he became disillusioned:

> We had hope, before, that we might be able to change the people in power, but I realised that this is not about the people in power; it is about the system. We could spend hundreds of years taking people out of the public prosecutors office or the attorney generals office, but ultimately, it is a structural problem.[470]

Thus, while Zelaya's government was more receptive and responsive to these pressures than his predecessors, which was a significant change in the status quo, the degree to

[468] Interview with Gilberto Rios, May 8, 2012.
[469] Dana Frank, "Out of the Past, A New Honduran Culture of Resistance," *NACLA Report on the Americas*, May 3, 2010.
[470] Interview with Jari Dixon, May 10, 2012.

which Honduras was transformed under Zelaya should not be overstated. Booth, Wade, and Walker have noted Zelaya's "contradictory embrace" of both neoliberal projects and the populist rhetoric that seemed to oppose them.[471] Indeed, many of his senior appointments were staunch neoliberals, like Gabriela Nuñez, who in an earlier stint as finance minister had "delivered Honduras, bound hand and foot, to the dictates of the IMF."[472] Though he would later make good on a promise to raise minimum wages, the Zelaya of 2007 actually approved a measure to create "differential wage zones" in five of the poorest departments, in an effort to drop wages to the floor to persuade *maquiladora* owners to stay in Honduras.[473] In 2009, prior to the coup, the U.S. Millennium Challenge Corporation, by no means a left wing institution, gave Zelaya a positive review for his ability to stabilize the Lempira, and to make good on the benefits of joining the PetroCaribe oil alliance.[474] He was also inconsistent with regard to the security apparatus, pledging to crack down on both crime *and* vigilantism, but then expanding the size and scope of the police force and allowing increased privatization of security; even former members of the infamous Battalion 3-16 death squad held positions in Zelaya's government, belying the notion that Zelaya represented a radical departure.[475]

The push for reform, then, came not from Zelaya but from the people; it came from ordinary Hondurans organizing around issues that were of direct and serious consequence to them. In this sense, Gordon and Webber's arguments above, foregrounding the importance of the social movement, have a great deal of merit.

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[471] For instance, Zelaya vocally supported both the neoliberal dictates of CAFTA and the alternative presented by membership in ALBA. Booth, Wade and Walker, 174.
[472] "Zelaya: Progressive but Pro-Business", *Central American Report*, March 2006.
[473] Marion Werner and Jennifer Bair, "After Sweatshops? Apparel Politics in the Circum-Caribbean," *NACLA Report on the Americas*, July/August 2009.
[474] Bill Conroy, "Honduran President Zelaya Earns High Marks for Governance, U.S. Agency Scorecard Shows," *The Narco News*, November 21, 2009.
[475] "Former Human Rights Abusers Now in Gov't," *Central American Report*, March 3, 2006.

Nevertheless, they emphasize this aspect of the pre-2009 dynamics at the expense of a more complicated analysis that accounts for the fact that Manuel Zelaya, for his part, proved to be significantly more responsive to demonstrations of popular politics than his predecessors. His reforms may have been inconsistent and had not radically altered the structural realities of Honduran life, but his readiness to bend to the will of popular movements was unprecedented in recent Honduran history and opened up the prospect of real change for the first time since the great strikes of the 1950s. Canadian journalist Jesse Freeston, who produced a documentary in 2012 on the *campesino* movement in the Aguán Valley, told me that the Hondurans he has worked closest with felt that Zelaya "passed the power test," making good on campaign promises to the poor that previous presidents had consistently broken, once in office, and that he had built a different kind of relationship with Honduran activists than any previous administration.[476] In fact, Zelaya's popularity – he is known in Honduras by the nickname "Mel" – is reflected in the mythology that is built up around his personal appeal and charisma; popular Honduran poet Roberto Sosa describes him:

> Mel has been blessed with a bombproof, coup-proof solidarity with the people, along with a gift for plain, unpretentious speech and great personal warmth. He has a huge heart, and, contrary to what his detractors say, he is open-minded and very intelligent. Moreover, he is a lover of poetry.[477]

Even if we acknowledge that these may be exaggerations, and that his degree of affection for poetry is not an analytically significant factor, Zelaya *is* regularly described as someone who could speak to people and relate to them, in a manner uncommon among the Honduran oligarchy. Populist appeal on its own does not make Zelaya a reformer,

[476] Interview with Jesse Freeston, Aug 23, 2011.
[477] Roberto Sosa, "In Honduras, The Walls Are Talking," *The Progressive*, November 2009.

but what is significant is that there developed a kind of dialectic between his populist character and the social policies he was enacting, as one side kept reinforcing the other in a dynamic that was opening increasing space for reform. Darío Euraque – admittedly a former member of Zelaya's government, but a critical one – described the Zelaya period thus:

> For the first time in Honduran history, you have a President, with all his failures and problems that most of the opposition points to, but the fact is that this President, who himself comes from the elites of Honduras, put out not only a discourse but even many policies that fundamentally questioned the political system of Honduras.[478]

With that in mind, Zelaya's endorsement of the *Constituyente* was arguably the most important gain for burgeoning Honduran social movements since the establishment of legitimate civilian government in the mid-1990s. Given the power that the Honduran oligarchy and foreign capitalists have been able to wield over the past three decades through the legal mechanisms of the state, under the 1982 constitution, an opportunity to re-organize and re-found the basis for that power, if conducted properly, could have made a number of much more significant reforms possible down the line. No administration for decades prior to Zelaya's had even considered such a departure from traditional Honduran politics – hence the swift and dramatic action taken against it – and, although Zelaya did not design or initiate the demand for reform, to ignore the important differences between his government and those that preceded him is to profoundly misunderstand the context of the coup and the popular resistance that followed. In short, what was significant in Zelaya's time in office was not so much the reforms he passed but the prospects for broader reforms embedded in the re-opening of the constitution, a

[478] Darío Euraque, quoted in Paley, 43.

project for which Zelaya was willing to provoke the full ire of his own social class to defend.

GOLPE DE ESTADO

Contrary to the unsubstantiated claims blithely and relentlessly repeated in the North American media since the 2009 coup, nothing in the re-opening of the constitution would have allowed Manuel Zelaya to run for re-election that year, though this useful misdirection was reinforced regularly by the oligarchy not only to convince the international community that the coup was necessary but, as Darío Euraque has argued, to convince the military to re-assert its role in Honduran politics so dramatically.[479] Nonetheless, the claim that Zelaya was moving towards making himself "president for life" was constantly repeated by nearly every mainstream media outlet in North America, and notably Canada's national newspaper, *The Globe and Mail*, which offered this editorial comment a week after the coup:

> It is important that Manuel Zelaya's machinations to rewrite the Honduran constitution to allow for a generalissimo clause were brought firmly and finally to an end. Like his idol, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, who won a referendum earlier this year to eliminate term limits, Mr. Zelaya wants to revert to the days in which Latin American heads of state could extend their rule indefinitely.[480]

As I will demonstrate, this fabrication hardly stands up to even the simplest examination – least of all the invention of a so-called "generalissimo clause" – and it undeniably says more about the state of the Canadian mainstream media than it does about Honduras.

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[479] Paley, 47.
[480] "Be Like Washington," *The Globe and Mail*, Jul. 6, 2009.

Needless to say, it is worth keeping the *Globe and Mail*'s commentary in mind as this analysis proceeds.[481]

The process was to be as follows: on June 28, 2009, Hondurans would have voted in a non-binding referendum on whether they supported the addition of the *cuarta urna* – a fourth ballot – in the general elections scheduled for November 29 of that same year. Normally, Honduran elections feature three ballots, corresponding to each of the three levels of government, that is, one for the local mayor, one for a *diputado* or representative in Congress, and one for the President. If the June 28 referendum came back with a strong 'yes,' Zelaya would have added the fourth ballot asking the question: "do you support the creation of a national constituent assembly to re-draft the constitution?" Accordingly, the constitution could not have possibly been changed *before* the November 29 elections, since it could only have gone ahead if approved in those elections, and so Zelaya could not have possibly stood for re-election. In fact, the primaries for that election had already taken place and the public was fully aware of which candidates had

[481] Speaking of fabrications, some of the most dramatic speculations came from the supposed centre-left, which imagined itself too progressive to support the coup, but too clever to support Zelaya, a position staked by popular liberal Canadian journalist Gwynne Dyer, whose October 2009 piece on the Honduras crisis suggested that Zelaya had intentionally provoked a coup d'etat by pretending that he was going to use the *Constituyente* to run for re-election, such that the military would react against him, thus provoking a crisis and creating a context in which rule of law would break down and he could use his new popularity to make himself president for life. Quite a story, though Dyer offers no evidence to support it and it ascribes to Zelaya a degree of long term diabolical cunning that seems rather farfetched, especially to people familiar with Honduran politics in general and Manuel Zelaya in particular. Gwynne Dyer, "Manuel Zelaya's Game II In Honduras," *The Georgia Straight*, Oct. 25, 2009. Perhaps most disappointing about Dyer's concoction is that, once upon a time, Dyer was a relatively progressive voice with respect to Honduras. In the early 80s, he wrote against the U.S. regional wars and took pains to highlight the ways that Honduras was set to be "trampled upon" by U.S. occupation and counter-revolution. Gwynne Dyer, "Honduras is in the Same Position Today as Cambodia Was a Decade Ago," *Kingston Whig-Standard*, Mar. 28, 1981.

successfully moved forward. Zelaya's name was not among them; even had he wanted to, it would have been illegal and impossible for Zelaya to be a candidate in 2009.[482]

The notion, then, that Zelaya intended to manipulate the process to stay in power is patently absurd.[483] Rosemary A. Joyce has argued that one of Zelaya's aims in pushing for the referendum was to re-engage Hondurans in the electoral process after two decades of steady declines in voter turnout and public confidence in elected leaders: "ironically, it was precisely to counter public disillusionment with elected government... that Zelaya called for a public consultation."[484] Joyce may be right; the Honduran social movements had demonstrated their strength in the streets, not with ballots, and it may well have been Zelaya's calculation that the *Constituyente* would have kept the movements' energies tied into electoral and legal processes that would limit their radical potential. Nevertheless, the Honduran Congress, packed with members of the oligarchy, felt that the re-opening of the constitution – under conditions they could not necessarily control – could represent a real threat to their stranglehold on power and refused to accept the idea. In response, Zelaya pledged, in March 2009, to appeal directly to the people through a referendum and vowed to pursue the fourth ballot if the people asked for it. That referendum was scheduled for June 28, 2009.

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[482] The issue of presidential term lengths, of course, is a contested matter in Honduras as it is in many Latin American countries. The limitations on presidential power would, no doubt, have been part of the discussion had a *Constituyente* been convoked. Many Honduran politicians, including Manuel Zelaya and current *golpista* president Pepe Lobo, have spoken against both the four-year term length and the restriction on running for re-election. To which side one falls in this debate is a rather trivial matter; the point is that speaking against a four-year maximum is not the same as moving towards becoming "president for life," and this accusation against Zelaya in the North American media is made all the more absurd by the fact that the United States allows its presidents to run for re-election to one additional full four-year term and Canada sets neither a limit on term-length nor any restriction on re-elections. Canada, in fact, theoretically allows for the possibility of being "Prime Minister for life" and, in practice, the current PM has been in power for over seven years and his most significant predecessor, Jean Chrétien, ruled for a decade.

[483] It is also roundly debunked in Álvaro Cálix, "Honduras: de la crisis política al surgimiento de un nuevo social actor," *Nueva Sociedad*, No. 226, April/May 2010.

[484] Rosemary A. Joyce, "Legitimizing the Illegitimate: The Honduran Show Elections and the Challenge Ahead," *NACLA Report on the Americas*, Vol. 43, No. 2, March/April 2010.

Of course, that process never went ahead because the morning that this non-binding poll was supposed to happen, Zelaya was abducted by the military and flown to Costa Rica. It was clear, months earlier, that the decision to re-open the constitution would be contested by the established power structure in Honduras. Between March and May 2009, a variety of different state officials tried to dissuade Zelaya from pursuing the referendum; the Supreme Court, the Electoral Tribunal and Congress all claimed that the poll would be illegal and, in the days leading up to the referendum, the Attorney General's office threatened to have Zelaya arrested if he continued to insist upon it.[485] These claims were based on a law hastily drafted and passed by Congress – just days before the referendum – that prohibited any referenda from taking place within six months of an election.[486] Following the new ruling, Gen. Romeo Vásquez Velásquez – head of the armed forces and a graduate of the notorious School of the Americas – announced on June 25, 2009, three days before the referendum, that the military would refuse to facilitate the poll by withholding logistical labour, not allowing his staff to distribute ballots and boxes. Zelaya had him immediately fired. The next day, the Supreme Court ruled that he must be reinstated, but Zelaya dramatically refused, saying, "if an army rebels against a president, then we are back to the era of the cavemen, back to the darkest chapters in Honduran history."[487] Zelaya and his supporters retrieved the ballots and boxes themselves and began distributing them across the country.

Choosing to interpret Zelaya's persistence on setting up for the poll as acting against the constitution, based on the clumsily constructed law passed just days before,

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[485] Michael Fox, "Honduran Coup: Same Story, Different Stage, New Reality," *Third World Resurgence*, No. 226, June 2009.
[486] Booth, Wade and Walker, 175.
[487] Manuel Zelaya Rosales, quoted in Mario Mencía Gamero, ed, *135 dias que estremecieron a Honduras*, Tegucigalpa, 2009, p. 16.

the Supreme Court ordered the armed forces to arrest the President.[488] On the morning of June 28, Manuel Zelaya was awakened at 5:15 am to find his home under military lockdown, as masked soldiers fired warning shots into the walls and held the President at gunpoint. The pre-dawn raid whisked Zelaya out of the Presidential palace in his pyjamas and bare feet to the Soto Cano air force base, from which the U.S. operates its Joint Task Force Bravo, and then on to Costa Rica.[489] Dramatic live video footage, broadcast internationally on Venezuela-based *Telesur*, showed people in the early hours of the day coming out to vote and finding the military in the streets, confiscating the referendum ballots[490]; in the capital city, a crowd gathered at the Presidential palace, and *Telesur* ran a video clip of outraged women who slammed their fists into the chests of

[488] At this point, the situation enters murky legal territory, though one might reasonably ask to what extent it is useful to interpret the situation by the standard of a legal system that was being re-written in an ad-hoc way in order to block one particular act (which sought to set into motion a project to re-establish that very legal system). Like the sentient consciousness known as "Hal" in Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, which stops at nothing to block the human astronauts from re-writing the computer coding that shapes its consciousness, the pillars of the Honduran legal system – the Congress and Supreme Court – were actively undermining the legitimacy of their own system of law in order to stop the referendum that might have threatened it. As such, I consider the relative legality or illegality of the referendum to be a rather misleading distraction, which I why I am addressing it simply in a footnote. Nonetheless, the relevant legal points are as follows: under the Citizen Participation Law of 2006, Zelaya was justified in pursuing the referendum and Congress was acting against the constitution in attempting to stop him. However, when Congress passed a law prohibiting referenda within six months of an election, it made Zelaya's poll illegal and justified his arrest if he pursued the project. When Zelaya dismissed Gen. Vásquez Velásquez, it was justified under Article 280 of the constitution, which allows the President to assign or remove the head of the armed forces. When the Supreme Court had Vásquez Velásquez reinstated, it did so based on Article 323, which establishes that the head of the armed forces is not compelled to carry out an illegal order, which is how the Supreme Court characterized Zelaya's perseverance in pursuing the referendum. On the day of the referendum, it could be argued, then, that according to the laws Congress had thrown up over the previous three days, President Zelaya could be arrested for carrying out what was now deemed an illegal referendum, since it was within six months of an election. However, following Article 102, there is no justification for the subsequent removal of Zelaya from the country and, of course, the later presentation by the armed forces – and acceptance by Congress – of a forged resignation letter was quite obviously illegal. Any persuasive force, then, that the *golpistas*' shaky and ad-hoc legal apparatus to justify Zelaya's removal might have had was utterly discredited by their subsequent behaviour which bore no resemblance whatsoever to a constitutional transfer of power but, rather, looked every bit the part of a military coup. The legal analysis is drawn from interviews with Jari Dixon, May 10, 2012, and Nectali Rodezno, May 4, 2012, and from Angel Edmundo Orellana, "Artículos sobre el golpe de estado en Honduras," CEDOH Boletín Especial, No. 93, September 2009, and Victor Meza et al, *Golpe de Estado: Partidos, instituciones y cultura política*, Lithopress Industrial, Tegucigalpa, 2010.

[489] Mencía Gamero, 16.

[490] Cálix, "Honduras..."

soldiers they would normally defer to, while scattered crowds elsewhere held impromptu demonstrations and performed impromptu street theatre depicting themselves voting "yes" to the constitutional assembly.[491]

With Zelaya removed, the military cut off electricity, phone service, international cable TV and even water to many neighbourhoods in Tegucigalpa and other major cities, and took all pro-Zelaya local TV stations off the air – even some international news stations were cut off, including CNN and *Telesur*.[492] Ambassadors from Venezuela, Nicaragua and Cuba all reported that they were detained and beaten by the Honduran armed forces,[493] as police and military violence escalated in the streets, targeting anyone who dared to participate in the public demonstrations. Indeed, simply being present in the streets was treated as justification for the police and military to attack, using tear gas, batons, water cannons, rubber bullets, and even live rounds, often in sudden charges of hundreds of heavily armed officers against unsuspecting crowds, who would be hammered on their backs as they tried to flee the scene.[494]

In the meantime, nine of Zelaya's ministers were detained, while countless others went into hiding, and a special session of Congress was called to hear the presentation of a fake letter of resignation, purportedly written by Zelaya, who immediately denied having written it.[495] Congress agreed to transfer the Presidency to Roberto Micheletti, head of Congress, whose first act was to order a 24-hour curfew for all Honduran citizens, which would actually last for three days. Anticipating international rebuke, the

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[491] Ashley Holly McEachern, "Postcard from Honduras: Birth of the coup," *This Magazine*, April 7, 2010.
[492] A. Cano, "Golpistas agradecen apoyo en mitin de autoconvencimiento," *La Jornada*, July 1, 2009.
[493] T. Rogers, "Leftist Leaders Hold Emergency Meeting Over Honduras Coup: Hugo Chávez, Daniel Ortega, and Other Leaders Met in Nicaragua," *The Christian Science Monitor*, June 29, 2009.
[494] Amnesty International, "Honduras: Submission to the UN Universal Periodic Review," November-December 2010.
[495] William Booth and Juan Forero, "Honduran Military Sends President into Exile: Supportive Congress Names Successor," *The Washington Post*, June 29, 2009.

oligarchy acted quickly to defend what had taken place. "I did not get here through the ignominy of a coup d'etat," insisted Micheletti.[496] Added one of his advisors:

> The decision was adopted by unanimity in the Congress. That means all of the political parties. It has been endorsed by sectors that represent a wide array of Hondurans – the Episcopal Church, the Catholic Church. And well, of course, the armed forces. The difficult part will be for the international community to see things as the Honduran people see them.[497]

The difficult part might, rather, have been convincing the international community that the people in these well-placed institutions of authority actually represented the Honduran people in any meaningful way. Certainly the Honduran oligarchy was on board; on June 29, 2009, the day after the coup, the most significant organization of the Honduran business elite, the *Consejo Hondureño de la Empresa Privada* (COHEP), issued a statement declaring that "what occurred today [sic] was not the changing of one president for another; today, [sic] framed in national unity, respect for the constitution, national laws, and institutionalism was achieved." Amílcar Bulnes, president of COHEP, added that:

> The private sector worked hard with ex-President Zelaya, but in the end he turned his attention to other themes, away from the country's priorities, from national issues. [...] The transitional government should make sure that there are no empty stomachs by generating job opportunities.[498]

Notably, the statements from the *golpistas* and their supporters, which saturated the Honduran mass media, framed the discussion as though the real problem was not the coup, but the fact that the international community had condemned it and that most countries refused to recognize or do business with the *de facto* regime. "When it rains, it

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[496] Booth and Forero, "Honduran Military...".
[497] Booth and Forero, "Honduran Military..."
[498] Amílcar Bulnes, quoted in Iván Vásquez, "Cohep respalda gobierno de Micheletti," *El Heraldo*, June 29, 2009.

pours," cried *El Heraldo*. "The poor of this country will be even more impoverished if sanctions are imposed." Taking the point further, COHEP's director Benjamín Bográn added, "who are they going to sanction? The politicians or the Honduran people? Because every time you impose sanctions, it is not the rulers who suffer, but the people."[499]

In the meantime, the *Asociación Hondureña de Maquiladores* (AHM), an association of owners in the *maquiladora* industry, was busy organizing marches in support of the coup, though they had to provide all of the materials and could only garner some attendance by forcing their employees to participate.[500] Outfitted in white t-shirts and massive Honduran flags, the pro-coup marches were a fabrication for international consumption. As Darío Euraque explained:

> Never in the history of Honduras has there ever been a mobilization along the lines of the white t-shirt [march]... part of the way to try to see how new it was, was that they didn't have a culture of resistance, of mobilization, so a lot of their music and placards and paraphernalia... was not even local. A lot of it was borrowed from Venezuela, Cuban Americans, lots of it was in English, peppered with English phrases and very manufactured placards and so forth.[501]

In fact, AHM and other organizations representing the oligarchy had been staging rallies such as these for months prior to Zelaya's ouster, usually against Zelaya or the proposal for constitutional reform, and many Hondurans participated in the so-called "White Marches" simply in order to get paid, in sharp contrast to the dangerous and certainly unpaid protests that were held in opposition to the coup.[502]

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[499] Benjamín Bográn, quoted in Vásquez, "Cohep respalda..."
[500] Paley, 44-45.
[501] Euraque, quoted in Paley, 45.
[502] Interview with Luis Aguilar, Nov. 26, 2009.

What followed the military takeover has been called the largest sustained peaceful demonstration in Honduran history: for 161 straight days, Hondurans took to the streets of Tegucigalpa, San Pedro Sula, and cities and towns across the country. The numbers fluctuated – sometimes as high as hundreds of thousands, at lowest ebbs still impressive thousands – protesting right up to the day of the "elections" on November 29, 2009. Predictably, they were met with widespread and violent repression. Between June and November 2009, some thirty to forty people were killed in political violence and hundreds more were detained, beaten, kidnapped, raped, and otherwise victimized by an increasingly militarized state apparatus.[503] On July 5, about a week after the coup, Manuel Zelaya attempted to re-enter the country but was prevented from landing at Tegucigalpa's Toncontín airport by the military, which unleashed a torrent of violence against the massive crowds that had gathered to greet Zelaya. Nineteen-year old Isis Obed Murillo was among those who had gathered, and was shot in the head and killed by the army. A few months later, members of his family showed me a shard of his skull and told me his story in a community meeting in a small kitchen in Jutiapa, near Danlí; Isis Obed was the son of a longtime activist in the movement, Jose David Murillo, who was detained immediately following his son's assassination. While David Murillo was in detention, his daughter – Isis Obed's sister – received a text message from Isis Obed's phone, which read, "I am your father HA HA HA."[504] Meanwhile, on September 21, Zelaya returned to Honduras a second time and took refuge in the Brazilian embassy,

[503] Interview with Bertha Oliva, Nov. 26, 2009. As I have explained elsewhere, these figures will often vary – not because the documentation is sketchy but, quite the opposite, because it endeavours to be airtight even under the most difficult circumstances. In a context where politically-motivated violence can be easily masked as gang or narco violence (and where the two sometimes overlap) human rights documentation has to work very hard to assess which is which and, thus, the estimates tend to be much lower than the actual scope of political violence.

[504] COFADEH, "Informe preliminar: violaciones a derechos humanos en el marco del golpe de estado en Honduras," June 15, 2009, p. 13-14.

where he remained for some four months, guarded by police under orders to arrest him the moment he left Brazilian territory.

Nonetheless, the coup and its attendant violence produced the unintended consequence of cementing the bonds between the very diverse organizations that had been working together under the CNRP. That body created the new FNRP soon after the coup, and it quickly became the most important popular organization in Honduras. Its members and supporters, like the CNRP before it, came primarily from the poor, working, and marginalized classes but, unlike the CNRP, the new organization also drew people in from the relatively small professional and political classes, including lawyers, doctors, left-liberal politicians and civil servants, many of whom were – like Zelaya himself – previously the targets of CNRP actions but suddenly found themselves aligned with the movement in response to the coup.[505] Marlon Hernández, for instance, was a journalist with *Diario Tiempo* and was well-connected in the oligarchy, but as a researcher with the Liberal Party he increasingly found himself compelled by Honduras' profound social inequality and sympathetic to the demands of the social movements. The coup marked a breaking point for Hernandez who, almost immediately, pledged his support for Zelaya and the Resistance.[506] The FNRP worked closely with local human rights organizations and some foreign NGOs, but its autonomy from foreign interlocutors (whatever their intentions) was never in question. The characterization – promoted by the oligarchy and its North American allies – of the movement as a Chávez-exported ring

[505] Interview with Juan Barahona, May 10, 2012.
[506] Interview with Marlon Hernández, October 21, 2012. Hernandez is now a Toronto-based advisor to the Zelaya family, who are effectively the leadership of the "28 de Junio" faction of the LIBRE party, which I discuss in Chapter 6.

of professional troublemakers and socialists was viewed as utterly absurd in a movement whose Honduran roots stretched back for decades.

But the *golpistas* and their beneficiaries were determined to stamp out this increasingly united movement; repression of the resistance was violent and thorough. Human rights groups like the *Comité de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos en Honduras* (COFADEH) worked tirelessly after the coup to produce detailed documentation of the brutality. On November 28, 2009, they, as part of a coalition of the six leading human rights groups in Honduras, called the *Plataforma de Derechos Humanos,* produced a report detailing the campaign of state terror that had been unleashed over the previous five months. That report was presented to the *Tribunal Supremo Electoral* (TSE) on the day before the coup government held "elections" to try to legitimize its authority in the country – a process about which I will say more below. In a formal declaration demanding that the "elections" be cancelled, on account of the impossibility of their being fair and free in the context of the coup and state terror, the human rights platform declared:

> (These "elections" are being conducted) in a context of grave and systematic violations of human rights. Since the day of the coup, we have documented 33 violent and politically motivated deaths, torture, cruel and inhuman and degrading treatment, sexual assault and restrictions on freedom of association, assembly, expression, opinion and more.[507]

They go on to note that holding elections under these circumstances was an absurd prospect, given that the same people who were committing this violence were those who were supposed to be responsible for running fair elections. They also drew attention to some of the highest-profile cases of repression. Carlos H. Reyes, a trade unionist,

[507] Official Statement by *Plataforma de Derechos Humanos* (CODEH, COFADEH, FIAN, CDM, CPTRT, CIPRODEH) to the TSE, Nov. 28, 2009.

member of the social movements and, initially, an independent Presidential candidate, was hospitalized after a brutal blow from police in a peaceful demonstration. Ulises Sarmiento, a well-known member of the Liberal Party who sympathized with the resistance, had his home ransacked by soldiers with automatic weapons in the department of Olancho. Eliseo Hernandez Juarez, a vice-mayoral candidate in Macuelizo, Santa Barbara, was assassinated.[508]

Not surprisingly, however, the violence was not limited to high-profile politicians; rather, it fell hardest on those who had the least resources to protect themselves. Victor Corrales Mejía and his son, working-class members of the FNRP, were arrested in November 2009 and beaten in their home. Police arrived in the middle of the night, hit Victor in the head and spine with batons, and threatened to kill him. "They kicked in my door, they threw me out like I was a sack of corn. They want to intimidate us," he told me, "but our desire for democracy is stronger than they are."[509] In Comayagua, where the resistance was strong, the Mayor threatened to give the names and addresses of anyone who interfered with the "elections" to the military. In fact, the military sent a letter a month before the "elections" demanding such lists from all the Mayors across the country:

> The purpose of this letter is to request your support with the following: names and telephone numbers of the leaders of the community who support the Democratic Civil Unity and that work jointly with the municipality for the goodness of the people. Leaders' names and telephone numbers that support the resistance movement and that cause unrest in community projects. Mr. Mayor, we need this information as soon as

[508] Official Statement by *Plataforma de Derechos Humanos* (CODEH, COFADEH, FIAN, CDM, CPTRT, CIPRODEH) to the TSE, Nov. 28, 2009.
[509] Interview with Victor Corrales Mejía, Nov. 29, 2009.

> possible so that we can be prepared each day in order to strengthen our democratic system.[510]

At the same time, the media were kept on a tight leash in order to contain the resistance. Immediately following the coup, journalists who were not loyal to the oligarchy were repressed by the military. Reporters from Venezuelan TV station *Telesur*, who attempted to provide live coverage of the coup, were consistently harassed and the few Honduran media outlets brave enough to speak out against the coup saw their journalists detained and beaten, their signals interrupted and their equipment ransacked.[511] *Radio Globo*, which emerged as one of the most significant alternative media outlets after the coup, quickly resorted to broadcasting almost exclusively online from secret locations, after the first months of repression. When *Globo*'s programming director David Romero chose, on June 28, 2009, to report that a coup was taking place, he found himself dragged in front of Gen. Romeo Vásquez Velásquez, who told Romero what he should be reporting:

> First [I was told] to recognize that what happened was a [presidential] succession and not a coup d'etat. Second, that it was necessary because Manuel Zelaya Rosales was violating the constitution and wanted to extend his term limit. And third, that the nation comes first, that [the coup] was to save the country from Chávez.[512]

Romero is proud of his station for standing up to the regime: "we've always believed Honduras needs profound changes," he said, "and that the oligarchy which has caused this country to be in a state of poverty [...] can't keep running the country." He also

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[510] Republished by Rights Action, "Honduras Coup Alert #93," Nov. 21, 2009.
[511] Committee to Protect Journalists, "After Honduran Coup, reporters detained, signals blocked," June 30, 2009.
[512] David Romero, quoted in Paley, 61-62.

quickly discovered that he had support, when he saw their station's market share of 7% before the coup jump to 28% after, largely in response to their critical coverage.

Radio Globo was one of a handful of media outlets – including *Radio Progreso* and *Radio Uno*, television station *Canal 36* (*Cholusat Sur*) and newspaper *El Libertador* – that chose to defy the regime and the rest of the corporate media, and faced relentless harassment as a result. Some, like *Canal 36*, were shut down altogether after having equipment destroyed, signals interrupted, offices ransacked, and editors assassinated. In October 2009, Roberto Micheletti issued a Presidential Decree, which was used to take critical media off the air for 22 days; Reporters Without Borders highlighted this action in a press release on October 21, 2009, noting that:

> Decree 124-2009, a measure published in the official gazette on October 7, 2009, allows the authorities to suspend any programme or media "fomenting social anarchy" – and, without saying so openly, is targeted at those that oppose the coup.[513]

The decree went into effect on September 28, 2009, and it gave authorities the green light to "halt the coverage or discussion through any media, be it verbal or printed, of demonstrations that threaten peace and public order" or that compromised the "dignity" of government authorities or decisions; it was used primarily to justify destruction and confiscation of equipment at *Radio Globo* and *Canal 36*, the two critical media outlets with best nationwide coverage.[514] And always lurking behind this systematic harassment was the threat of violence against those who did not bend to the regime's pressure, like *El Libertador* photojournalist Delmer Membreño, who was kidnapped and tortured in

[513] Reporters Without Borders, "Anti-Coup Media Resumes Broadcasting, But Closely Controlled," October 21, 2009.
[514] Sandra Cuffe, "The Snakes Sleep: Attacks against the Media and Impunity in Honduras," *Upside Down World,* November 23, 2010.

Tegucigalpa on the same day that Decree 124-2009 took effect. He described the experience to Sandra Cuffe, with his body still marred by bruises and burns:

> They put a balaclava over my head, they handcuffed me, and they burned my body. They hit me, and they uttered threats against the newspaper I work for, *El Libertador*. [...] They burned my body with cigarettes. Here [on my arm], my face, and my chest. They ripped my shirt and left me without shoes... "Cry, cry! Why aren't you crying, you commie?" That's what they said... They said that the director better be careful, that they were following him, and that what they had done to me was nothing in comparison to what they were going to do to him.[515]

On the other side, the pro-coup media fell upon themselves to support the regime and denounce the FNRP at every opportunity. In his detailed 2009 assessment of the media in Honduras, Manuel Torres Calderón argued that the country was a "plutocracy" in which the same families who controlled the banks, commerce, agroindustry, energy, telecommunications, tourism, the *maquiladoras,* and the service sector also controlled the overwhelming majority of the news and entertainment media.[516] Those same oligarchs are embedded in the political and judicial system, either directly or by proxy, and exert immense influence over the politics of the country by their control of the media. For instance: there are four major newspapers in Honduras - *El Heraldo* and *La Prensa* are both owned by Jorge Canahuati Larach and his family, *La Tribuna* is owned by former President Carlos Flores Facussé, and *Diario Tiempo* is owned by the family of Jaime Rosenthal Oliva, whose family also owns two of the major TV stations. Three additional TV stations are owned by the families of Rafael Ferrari and Manuel Villeda Toledo. Torres Calderón concludes:

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[515] Delmer Membreño, quoted in Cuffe, "The Snakes Sleep..."
[516] Manuel Torres Calderón, "El poder de los señores mediáticos en Honduras," in *Poderes, Fácticos y Sistema Político, 3rd ed*, Centro De Documentación de Honduras, Tegucigalpa, 2009, p. 137.

> There is no precise data on the total wealth that each of these families possess. All of these businessmen also control a variety of other interests (banking, securities, exports, production, imports, telecommunications, data transmission, oil and gas, water, etc) alongside their ownership of the major media outlets. This is one of the principal problems affecting the quality of freedom of speech in Honduras...[517]

No surprise, then, that almost the entire Honduran media was mobilized to support the coup. In addition to selective coverage of events and transparently pro-coup reporting, the *golpista* media abandoned any semblance of liberal journalistic integrity by engaging in a variety of fraudulent and terroristic practices. In July 2009, the newspaper *La Prensa* applied an embarrassingly clumsy dose of photoshop to an image it published of a victim of state violence, the above-mentioned Isis Obed Murillo, taking the time to erase the blood that stained his shirt and was dripping from his head.[518] On November 1, 2009, Belén Fernández reported that the main Honduran newspapers were taking photographs of protestors at FNRP demonstrations and delivering them to the police.[519] The media even began acting as an unofficial organ of the regime, disseminating its campaign of popular intimidation, as on November 8, 2009, when *El Heraldo* asserted that "calls against the election process on November 29 will not go unpunished."[520]

Meanwhile, even organizations that were not directly linked to the resistance – but which posed other challenges to the state's neoliberal agenda – were being targeted in the context of police impunity. On November 28, 2009, the *Red de Comercialización Comunitaria Alternativa* (COMAL), a *campesino* organization that helps small farmers to

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[517] Torres Calderón, 158-159.
[518] "La Prensa de Honduras borra la sangre de la foto de Isis Obed Murillo," *Resistencia Morázan*, July 7, 2009. The writers who exposed the fraud by presenting both the original photo and the printing from *La Prensa* called it a "creepy and macabre manoeuvre."
[519] Belén Fernández, "Freedom of the Press Acquires New Definitions," *The Narco News*, November 1, 2009.
[520] Tamar Sharabi, "Independent Presidential Candidate and Liberal Party Vice-Presidential Candidate Among Those Who Withdrew from the Ballot," *The Narco News*, November 22, 2009.

market their produce and runs educational campaigns designed to build networks between *campesinos* and social movements, had its offices attacked, computers and money stolen, and employees beaten. I arrived at the COMAL offices in Siguatepeque at around 3:30 that afternoon to find the grounds crawling with military and police – notably from the state-sponsored COBRA paramilitary units – who quickly detained us near the gate to the compound. The head of the operation explained to my colleague, Adelid Vega, a lawyer working with COFADEH, that the compound was suspected of housing guerrillas, and that the police were investigating a report that weapons were stashed there. When the military/police brigade left, we were finally able to enter the grounds to survey the damage, which was considerable, and were given the following update from director José Trinidad Sánchez:

> The police said it was a search-and-seizure of firearms and weapons against the safety of the people. They began searching all the offices, smashing windows to get in. Like all organizations like ours, we have done political work around the coup and our strategy towards it. There were pieces of paper on how the coup has been for us and how do we want to re-found the country. It is not illegal to talk about it, but when they found this "evidence" they called it "subversive materials." They took everything...and took a lot of reports on community meetings. At the end of the reports were names, which they were very interested in.[521]

Alongside the campaign of terror, the oligarchy used its considerable resources to undermine the political legitimacy of President Zelaya and those who opposed the coup. In a pamphlet distributed by the military in the department of Intibucá on November 14, 2009, the *golpistas* asserted that:

> Twenty-first century socialism is the same thing as twentieth century communism, only it is more tedious because we know that nothing is going to happen. This boring film is being

[521] Interview with José Trinidad Sánchez, November 28, 2009.

> promoted by criminals such as Fidel Castro, Hugo Chávez, Rafael Correa, Daniel Ortega and in Honduras by drug-dealer Manuel Zelaya Rosales, supported by Latin-American drug cartels... Right now, the ideas of these criminals are being enforced by threats: bombs, sabotage, burning of businesses, insults, lies and murder... These people are not civilized. What they are doing is truly criminal and similar to the actions of communists in the eighties in Central-American countries.[522]

The FNRP categorically denied the claims that they were connected to drug traffickers or engaged in bombings and sabotage; there has not been a single identifiable case of such violence being brought against the coup regime even once since the coup took place.[523]

PANTOMIME ELECTIONS

This was the context for the "elections" held by the coup regime on November 29, 2009 – widespread repression, military lockdown, state terror, and tight control of the media – and they could hardly be called circumstances under which democracy is likely to flourish. On the day of the vote, the FNRP urged Hondurans to stay home and boycott the "farce elections," and that is precisely what happened. On election day – a day that is normally a boisterous street party, with people lining up for free meat from the primary political parties, whose red and blue flags would be in full display – Honduras was

[522] "Is 21st Century Socialism a Project or a Boring Film?" pamphlet distributed by military reservists in La Esperanza, Intibucá, on November 14, 2009. Reproduced in *El Frente Intibucano de Resistencia Popular Contra el Golpe de Estado*, Press Release, November 17, 2009.

[523] The only event that comes close is a widely reported but routinely mischaracterized burning of a Popeye's Chicken location in Tegucigalpa during a demonstration on August 11, 2009. In what appeared to most observers as a fairly obvious case of police infiltration of the rally, a small group of protestors began throwing stones at the Popeye's Chicken and inciting others to violence against it. The demonstration was carefully and heavily marshalled, and most protestors ignored the provocation, while a small group chose to express their understandable enmity against the U.S. fast food chain that exploits Honduran labour and pays no taxes to the Honduran state. During the vandalism of the store, Honduran police sat a block back and allowed the event to take place, a telltale sign that police provocateurs were behind the event, since acts of restraint by the Honduran police in this period were rare. The next day – and for many weeks following – the story was plastered all over the *golpista* media and was used to justify ever more violent repression in response. The Popeye's building was left notably untouched for years after the event, likely in order to reinforce the idea – especially among foreign reporters – that the FNRP was a violent organization. When Popeye's finally tore it down, it was rebuilt as a mega-complex with three additional fast food outlets, perhaps to demonstrate it's hydra-esque ability to return with even more heads. For more on the alleged vandalism, see Tyler Shipley, "Between a Bank and a Burger King: Election Farce in Honduras," *Canadian Dimension*, Nov 26, 2009.

suspiciously quiet and subdued. Most reports from human rights observers across the country suggested that the polling stations had more military and police attending them than civilians, which was certainly in line with my own eyewitness accounts. That evening, the TSE itself admitted that only around 1.7 million people voted, in a country of nearly 8 million, with 4.6 million eligible to vote. That makes for a turnout of around 35% of eligible voters – about 20% of the entire population – the lowest since the return of formal democracy in the early 80s.[524] Of these, some 7% of the votes were reported as blank or spoiled, in many cases spoiled in protest, covered in anti-coup statements and images.[525] Inexplicably, the TSE nonetheless announced a "projected" turnout of 60%, which became the number repeated in almost every international news source;[526] the TSE never provided a breakdown of how it came to that number and the only partial explanation it offered for the inconsistent figures was a rather absurd decision to exclude the 1.2 million absentee Hondurans – those living outside the country – from the total number of "eligible voters,"[527] despite the fact that they *were* eligible to vote and many of them did.[528] For its part, the FNRP estimated a turnout of around 30%, and pre-eminent Honduran journalist Felix Molina still insists that it was likely less than 25%.[529]

A few days after the election, video journalist Jesse Freeston of *The Real News* was able to get into the TSE headquarters and produced a video that documented that the TSE had generated fraudulent voter totals designed to create the illusion that Hondurans

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[524] Tyler Shipley, "Where Are The People?" *Canadian Dimension*, Dec. 1, 2009.
[525] "Votos nulos y blancos son tercera fuerza" *La Tribuna*, December 13, 2009.
[526] *Fox News* in the United States was one of the few exceptions, reporting the absurd figure of 70%; no one has yet been able to explain where that number came from.
[527] Todd Gordon, *Imperialist Canada*, Winnipeg, Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2010, p. 380.
[528] I spoke with a group of Honduran businessmen living in the United States who were flying back to Honduras to vote – because they wanted to support the "democratic process" that Micheletti was fostering – on November 22, 2009.
[529] Interview with Felix Molina, May 2, 2012.

had not boycotted the election; one TSE employee admitted that the official results were "pure fabrication."[530] Indeed, in a special issue of *Nueva Sociedad* dedicated to the coup in Honduras, Álvaro Cálix demonstrates that the elections were fraudulent even by the standards of minimal liberal democratic norms.[531] It should not come as any great surprise that the TSE was involved in the fraudulent consolidation of the coup; two of the TSE's three presiding judges were illegally appointed to their positions under coup-leader Roberto Micheletti.[532] But it is worth remembering that most Hondurans connected to the social movements understood that even if the vote-counting process had been carried out legitimately on election day, these elections were still unquestionably a sham or, as Felix Molina put it, a pantomime of a proper democratic process.[533] As the Human Rights Platform explained in its above-mentioned Nov. 28, 2009 document:

> Holding reliable elections does not depend solely on the implementation of sophisticated technology, international observers or the strict adherence to the formal process; it also requires knowing that there was a clean process preceding the elections, produced by a climate of full freedom, one where candidates and the electorate can express themselves openly and in a context of absolute equality, without fear of assassination, torture, detention and incarceration.[534]

Indeed, an interview I conducted with Edward Fox, a former USAID official, Republican Party campaign financer, and an elections observer sent from Washington to legitimate the process, demonstrated quite plainly that the few organizations that went to Honduras for the elections were not interested in investigating anything that was

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[530] Jesse Freeston, "Exclusive: Honduran Elections Exposed," *The Real News*, December 6, 2009. Available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1O_0uJqoVtI
[531] Cálix, "Honduras..."
[532] Enrique Ortez Sequeira and David Matamoros were members of Tegucigalpa City Council and the National Congress, respectively, and therefore neither was constitutionally entitled to preside over the TSE.
[533] Interview with Felix Molina, November 24, 2009.
[534] Official Statement by *Plataforma de Derechos Humanos* (CODEH, COFADEH, FIAN, CDM, CPTRT, CIPRODEH) to the TSE, Nov. 28, 2009.

happening away from the polling stations.[535] As we spoke on camera from Miami International Airport on December 1, 2009, Fox claimed to have heard nothing about human rights violations, cast suspicion on the groups documenting the violence despite not being able to name a single one of them, and justified his endorsement of the elections by telling me that he had spoken to the U.S. Ambassador who is, Fox reminded me, "there all the time."[536] His organization, the Washington Senior Observer Group, reported that they:

> Witnessed the enthusiastic desire of thousands of Honduran citizens to cast their ballots. Many took time to thank us for our presence today. Without exception, they expressed confidence in the electoral system, pride in exercising their right to vote, and a profound hope that their election is a decisive step toward the restoration of the constitutional and democratic order in Honduras.[537]

They further asserted that they saw "no voter intimidation by any group, individual, or party" and that their observations "coincide with those reported by other observers and by the media throughout Honduras."[538] Nonetheless, when I asked Edward Fox about those other observers, the groups that had been documenting the violence and terror, he admitted that he had not spoken to any of them. Avoiding them must have taken some effort because, when the Honduran human rights platform presented its report to the TSE on November 28, the U.S. observers were there; in fact, the human rights delegation had their meeting scheduled for 2:00 p.m. but had to wait until well after 4:00 p.m. because TSE officials were meeting with the unofficial U.S. observers. We were all there

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[535] I had met a number of the elections observers a few days earlier, but my encounter with Edward Fox on December 1 was entirely coincidental, as we waited together at a luggage carousel in Miami after our respective flights out of Honduras.

[536] Interview with Edward Fox, Dec. 1, 2009.

[537] Washington Senior Observer Group, "Statement on the National Elections in Honduras," December 1, 2009.

[538] Washington Senior Observer Group, "Statement on the National Elections in Honduras," December 1, 2009.

together, and at one point I overheard the U.S. observers chatting amongst themselves derisively about the human rights group and about Honduras in general. When I confronted Edward Fox on this point, he quickly changed the subject.[539]

In addition to the organizations like the Washington Senior Observer Group, the coup regime worked diligently to acquire the services of like-minded, far-right organizations from around the world. *Granma International* reported that the job of finding election observers was entrusted to the COHEP president, the above-mentioned Amílcar Bulnes, and that he managed to find some 300-500 individuals from a variety of right wing think tanks and business groups.[540] The list included former Central American right wing leaders like Alvaro Arzú from Guatemala and Alfredo Cristiani from El Salvador, whose credentials on human rights and democracy only look good when compared to the worst offenders of the 1980s. Also invited to observe the elections were representatives from neo-Nazi groups like UnoAmérica, which was linked to an assassination plot against Bolivian president Evo Morales, and far-right lobby groups like the Latin American and Caribbean Network for Liberty, closely tied to the notorious National Endowment for Democracy.

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[539] This interview was particularly illustrative of the flimsy edifice upon which the regime's legitimacy was being built. Fox was not especially careful in his statements with me, at least until he realised that I was well-informed, by which point the artificiality of his observation process had been plainly laid bare. As he back-pedalled through his denial of state terror and violence, his denial of the coup itself, his demonstrably false claims that the *Constituyente* process had been "overwhelmingly rejected," and his admittance that most of his investigation in Honduras was a conversation with the U.S. ambassador, the result was a candid portrait of the right-wing U.S. ideologue gone back to Honduras to subvert its democratic processes yet again, this time using Hugo Chávez and Manuel Zelaya – instead of the *Sandinistas* and the FMLN – as the requisite bogeymen. (Fox claimed to have participated in electoral observation in the 1981 elections, held under the military dictatorship and designed to forestall growing social movement activity and secure Honduras as a base for U.S. military operations in Central America, as described in Chapter 4.) Forced to defend his claims against real evidence, his construction of free and fair elections crumbled quickly and dramatically. I have provided a transcript of this illuminating interview in Appendix C.

[540] Jean-Guy Allard, "Honduras: Dictatorship Recruiting Right-Wing Extremists as 'Observers,'" *Granma International*, November 12, 2009.

These so-called observers, then, worked very hard to avoid observing that which was patently obvious to most Hondurans. It wasn't just voters who had boycotted the elections; almost all independent candidates in the country withdrew their names, and even many candidates from the moderate wing of the Liberal Party – from which Zelaya himself was drawn – pulled themselves out of the process in public defiance of what they considered farce elections. Indeed, the process that the coup regime put in place could perhaps best be described, following the work of Edward Herman and Frank Brodhead in the 1980s, as "demonstration elections:" their purpose was never to facilitate any meaningful political participation but, rather, to demonstrate enough of the superficial edifice of democracy to satisfy its international partners that it could appear legitimate enough to support.[541] In the context of the North American endorsement of the elections, it is worth emphasizing that many of the candidates who boycotted the elections were high-profile figures who would have been almost guaranteed to win a first or second term in office, had they stood for election.

The most obvious example, as noted above, was Carlos H. Reyes, a union leader who was set to run as an independent candidate on a reformist platform that would have likely stolen votes from the center-left Democratic Unification (UD) and the Party of Innovation and Social Democratic Unity (PINU), as well as the presiding Liberal Party; significantly, President Zelaya had given his endorsement to Reyes rather than the Liberal candidate Edwin Santos. Polls across different points in 2009 had Carlos H. Reyes ranking as high as third out of six presidential candidates in popularity. Reyes was

[541] Herman and Brodhead originally described this process as: "a circus held in a client state to assure the population of the home country [the United States] that their intrusion is well received. The results are guaranteed by an adequate supply of bullets provided in advance." Edward S. Herman and Frank Brodhead, *Demonstration Elections: U.S.-Staged Elections in the Dominican Republic, Vietnam and El Salvador*, Boston, South End Press, 1984.

an active member of the FNRP and, on July 30, 2009, he was bludgeoned in the head by a police baton at a demonstration in Tegucigalpa.[542] On November 9, 2009, convinced that there was no chance that the regime would allow legitimate elections to take place, he officially withdrew, stating that, "the observers contracted by the Supreme Electoral Tribunal are not a guarantee for the security and transparency of the electoral process because they are the same organizations that have justified the coup d'etat."[543] Indeed, Edward Fox's comments are a testament to the wisdom of Reyes' concerns.

Four days after Reyes' withdrawal, he was joined in the boycott by Rodolfo Padilla Sunceri, then mayor of Honduras' second-largest city, San Pedro Sula. Padilla was a member of the moderate wing of the centre-right Liberal Party and was a popular frontrunner in San Pedro Sula, but withdrew his candidacy on November 13, 2009, citing the impossibility of a meaningfully democratic process and adding that "the people don't believe in this process." Another prominent candidate to drop off the ballot was Maria Margarita Zelaya Rivas, vice-Presidential candidate for Zelaya's Liberal Party and Manuel Zelaya's cousin. "My resignation speaks," she stated, "for those that cannot express their thoughts for fear that the *de facto* government will take reprisal against them."[544] An additional 110 mayoral candidates and 55 congressional candidates, many of them leading in their respective races, pulled out of the election in recognition of the illegitimacy and unpopularity of the process, though David Matamoros, Secretary of the TSE, claimed in *La Tribuna* that only 0.1% of the candidates had dropped out of the

[542] "International Mission denounces the brutal repression of pacific demonstrations," *Agencia Latinoamericano de Información*, July 30, 2009.
[543] Carlos H. Reyes, quoted in Sharabi, "Independent Presidential Candidate..."
[544] Sharabi, "Independent Presidential Candidate..."

election.[545] It is worth repeating here that candidates for these elections had been selected through a process of primaries before the June 2009 coup, with the official TSE convocation taking place on May 29, 2009. November 29, 2009 was the scheduled date for the elections and all of those who withdrew from the elections had been nominated prior to the break from democratic order.

The centre-left parties referenced above (UD and PINU) faced a difficult choice with regard to the elections, since state recognition as a legal party – and the crucial funding that comes with it – would have been revoked if they withdrew. Both of these parties were split on the question of whether to participate. UD, in particular, had struggled very hard over the past decade to achieve the legal status it had and throwing that away was unacceptable to many; it was a party organized out of the few activist groups that survived the 1980s and was reliant on the support it got from its official status, including paid employees for parties that gained seats and L350,000 for campaign financing.[546] Tomás Andino, who ran for office with UD in 1997, argues that the party was fundamentally co-opted by the oligarchy in 2006 when it entered into an alliance with the National Party. By the time of the coup, UD was a marginal player in the Honduran left, and its decision to participate in the November 2009 elections was disappointing to many but surprising to few. César Ham, the leader of UD who had forged the alliance with the National Party in 2006, was widely discredited for supporting the coup and was "rewarded" for his decision with a cabinet appointment in the Lobo regime, which has only further de-legitimized UD's role in the Resistance.[547] Ham was

[545] Sharabi, "Independent Presidential Candidate..."
[546] Interview with Felix Molina, November 25, 2009.
[547] Interview with Tomás Andino, May 9, 2012.

named the director of the *Instituto Nacional Agrario* (INA), the agrarian institute embroiled in the state's efforts to rollback land reforms, of which I will say more below.

The regime, predictably, denied that there was any momentum behind a boycott campaign and clumsily tried to write-off the boycott as a product of "foreign meddling." Coup leader Roberto Micheletti told the *El Tiempo* newspaper on November 16, 2009, that hundreds of foreigners had been entering the country in order to disrupt Honduran democracy. "We have knowledge of this," he claimed, "our military, supported by our allies and friends, have initiated an investigation that has secured information about people from Venezuela or Nicaragua coming here to try to cause trouble to the electoral process." Micheletti proceeded to use this alleged foreign intervention to justify a massive military presence and the threat of drastic penalties for anyone who tried to disrupt the elections.[548]

Even speaking out against the elections was made dangerous. As noted above, the *El Heraldo* newspaper promised would-be demonstrators that there would be swift punishment for campaigning against the elections, and *El Tiempo* added that calling for any interference to the electoral process could earn a person four to six years in prison.[549] The regime made certain that these were not empty threats. Renowned environmental activist and Goldman-prize-winner Padre Andres Tamayo was charged for calling for an election boycott and, after spending several weeks under house arrest in the Brazilian embassy, he was deported to El Salvador after having lived in Honduras for twenty-six years. Meanwhile, Andrés Pavón, director of prominent human rights organization CODEH, found himself charged with defamation and impeding the elections after

[548] "Micheletti: Hundreds of Foreigners Coming In To Boycott Elections," *El Tiempo*, November 16, 2009.
[549] "De 4 o 6 años de prisíon a quien infrinja Ley Electoral" *El Tiempo*, November 11, 2009.

making statements expressing fear of more military massacres and encouraging people to stay safe at home on election day.[550]

Such fear was not unfounded. As José Miguel Cruz rightly notes, "the coup was supported and enforced by police officers in the streets who, for years, had been identified as responsible for extrajudicial killings and human rights abuses."[551] In addition to the 12,000 police and 11,000 soldiers on duty on election day, the coup regime called up 5,000 reservists on November 13, 2009[552] and brought on an estimated 15,000 private security agents from 14 different companies, temporarily granted military fatigues, weapons, and powers.[553] These heavily armed commandos patrolled the streets, the voting stations, and the highway checkpoints across the country. As I travelled with Honduran human rights observers through different cities and towns in the southern departments on election day, and in the days leading up to it, we were subjected to almost constant stops and searches, and as we sat in community meetings, we heard story after story of intimidation and violence. On the day that the elections took place, I ate dinner with a group of people from a small community in Danlí, who had hung a banner on the main road into town declaring themselves "Melista," saying "no to the elections and yes to the *Constituyente*," and, as we chatted, a group of 10-15 military vehicles rumbled past the front door, reinforcing the sense that simply stating opposition to the electoral process was enough to bring state violence to your door.

The boycott was, nevertheless, a demonstration of strength by the movement. Across the country, the decision to stay home and boycott in silence was carried out by

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[550] Sharabi, "Independent Presidential Candidate..."
[551] José Miguel Cruz, "Estado y violencia criminal en América Latina," *Nueva Sociedad*, No. 226, April/May 2010.
[552] Joyce, "Legitimizing the Illegitimate..."
[553] Tyler Shipley, "Honduras – State of Emergency," *Canadian Dimension*, Nov. 29, 2009.

most Hondurans; in a few cities, pockets of people chose to heed Manuel Zelaya's contradictory message (broadcast only the day before the elections) to rally in the streets, and where they did they met predictable repression, as in a series of violent clashes in San Pedro Sula.[554] The following day, the movement took to the streets in earnest to celebrate its defiance of the election process. Across the country, tens of thousands made their presence felt; in Tegucigalpa, the movement organized a caravan, which slowly snaked through the labyrinthine streets of the capital city, horns honking, FNRP flags flying, upturned and uninked pinky fingers in the air in visible demonstration that the people had not voted.[555] The caravan was an awe-inspiring display of the strength of the movement and, above all, it made it impossible for anyone in the capital city to deny that the boycott had been a massive popular demonstration. This is a point worth emphasizing, since so much of the whitewashing of the coup would rest upon the perception that Hondurans had happily and freely participated in the electoral process.

Indeed, it is worth returning to the description I wrote the evening after the elections:

> Honduras today is like an Orwellian nightmare. A façade of calm as soldiers patrol the streets with automatic weapons; a theatrical production of democracy in a state that no longer has a functioning code of law; a discourse of peace that so completely fails to convince, it almost seems like it is intended to mock its victims. Indeed, one placard yesterday read, "2 + 2 = 5? Do not insult us, *golpistas*."[556]

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[554] It was unclear what motivated Zelaya's last-minute call for the people to take the streets. Zelaya was the nominal coordinator of the FNRP, but his being barricaded into the Brazilian Embassy made him somewhat disconnected from the movement itself. Some speculated that his call out, defying the official FNRP position, was designed to test the movements' allegiance. Others insist that it was a miscommunication amongst the leadership. In any event, few people responded to Zelaya's call, and the overwhelming majority of Hondurans simply stayed home.

[555] Honduran polling stations use an ink stamp on the pinky finger to demonstrate that a person has voted. As such, the waving of an un-inked finger became the visible sign of the boycott.

[556] Tyler Shipley, "Where Are The People?" *Canadian Dimension*, December 1, 2009.

It was all, really, an elaborate piece of theatre. When my flight had arrived in the capital a week earlier, packed with North American journalists en route from Miami, the cabin announcement said, "welcome to Honduras, a country of peace and justice." A week later, as the journalists flew home, the airport kiosks were selling white t-shirts celebrating Honduran democracy. For all the energy the regime was putting into repressing the social movement, it clearly understood that it needed to construct the edifice of legitimacy in the international community in order to bring the coup to its successful completion. This required both an effective mimicry of democratic process and liberal freedoms, and a complicit audience willing to ignore everything beyond that flimsy canvas. Fortunate, indeed, for the *golpistas*, that they were able to count on a few powerful allies to fulfill that role. Chief among them was Canada, which, from the very beginning, was the strongest international partner to the coup; the Honduran oligarchy and armed forces performed a pantomime of democracy and the Canadian state committed itself to assisting in that project. The following chapter will detail Canada's support for the coup and its subsequent whitewashing, in light of the analysis I have provided here.

CHAPTER SIX – CANADA AND THE COUP

The previous chapter demonstrated that the coup d'etat in Honduras was a reaction by the entrenched Honduran oligarchy against a swelling democratic social movement that had successfully pressured the President to adopt policies that increasingly reflected the will of average Hondurans instead of the oligarchy. This chapter will examine Canada's response to the coup d'etat and the violent repression that flowed from it. In particular, this chapter seeks to show: first, that the Canadian state went to great lengths to support this violent and anti-democratic coup, in spite of its rhetorical commitments to the very values and politics threatened by the coup; and second, that repression and resistance continued throughout the period of Canada's escalating engagement with the Honduran regime, which included Canada's efforts to whitewash that very repression and deny the popularity of the resistance. On the basis of these arguments, I will insist that the coup fits into the long trajectory of foreign intervention in Honduras which, in its current form, is most commonly manifest in the collaboration between foreign states and capital, and their local counterparts in the political-military-capitalist elite. This final point will be introduced here and carried over into Chapter 7, which will be primarily interested in explaining the apparent contradiction between Canadian behaviour and rhetoric by illustrating concretely Canada's vested political and economic interest in protecting the imperial order in Honduras. In this way, then, the following two chapters will demonstrate how Canada has put itself forward as heir to the colonial and imperial powers that have plagued Honduras for five centuries, as part of Canada's broader global re-positioning as an imperialist country.

CANADA'S RESPONSE TO THE COUP

Having outlined the key developments in the lead-up to, and execution of, the coup d'etat in 2009, the next step will be to reflect on Canada's behaviour during that time. From the outset, it was notable that Canada's response to the coup was among the slowest and softest in the Western hemisphere. Consider the reactions from across the hemisphere: while Presidents Chávez and Morales of Venezuela and Bolivia predictably condemned the coup in strong language, even centre-left and liberal governments were swift in their rebuke. A statement from Argentinean President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner read, "I do not hesitate to call this a return to barbarity. All countries of the continent and the entire international community should demand the return of the democratically elected president."[557] The foreign ministry of Ecuador immediately asserted that it would recognize no government in Honduras except that of Manuel Zelaya, and the Brazilian embassy demanded the "immediate and unconditional" return of Zelaya to power. Mauricio Funes of El Salvador expressed his full solidarity with Zelaya, and Fernando Lugo of Paraguay insisted that the *golpistas* should be imprisoned.

Canada, by contrast, waited the entire day before offering a statement; some 15 hours after the dramatic footage first hit the airwaves, Canadian Minister of State for the Americas Peter Kent finally echoed international calls for the restitution of the rule of law in Honduras. But his was certainly one of the softest rebukes of the *golpistas*, as he "called upon *all parties* to seek peaceful resolution to the crisis." I emphasize "all parties" to highlight Kent's misleading characterization of two sides in conflict, when, in fact, there was only one side in a position to exercise power or restraint, the military and

[557] BBC News, "World Reaction: Honduran Crisis," June 28, 2009.

oligarchs who had kidnapped a duly elected President, undermined a legitimate public consultation and seized dictatorial power by force. Kent's statement read:

> Canada condemns the coup d'état that took place over the weekend in Honduras, and calls on all parties to show restraint and to seek a peaceful resolution to the present political crisis, which respects democratic norms and the rule of law, including the Honduran Constitution.[558]

He makes particular reference to the Honduran Constitution, an interesting choice given that the poll disrupted by the coup was gauging public appetite for redrafting that very constitution, as discussed above.

If this was a disappointing first response, Canada's position only became more supportive of the *golpistas* over the following months, despite the relentless and unmistakable project of state repression described above. Canada's official statements over these months served both to obfuscate the truth and misdirect public attention, while it's actions offered implicit support to the coup regime. About a week after the coup, Peter Kent told the OAS that the international community had tilted too far in favour of Zelaya: "the coup was certainly an affront to the region, but there is a context in which these events happened [...] There has to be an appreciation of the events that led up to the coup."[559] Indeed, Canada's second official statement on the coup made certain not to tilt towards Zelaya, focusing instead on an insistence that he *not* return to Honduras until the time was right. Before moving into the typical patter of rhetorical calls for non-violence, Kent's statement read:

> In light of the mediation process involving representatives of President Zelaya of Honduras and the *de facto* government this weekend in Costa Rica, Canada wishes to stand with our

[558] D-FAIT, "Statement by Minister of State Kent on the Situation in Honduras," No. 184, June 28, 2009.
[559] Peter Kent, quoted in M. Lacey and G. Thompson, "Envoy Prepares to Visit Honduras Warning of Obstacles," *The New York Times*, July 3, 2009.

> colleagues in the region and reiterate the call for restraint in the timing of President Zelaya's return to Honduras. A return to Honduras should only occur when a peaceful solution has been found and conditions are appropriate. A return to Honduras prior to a negotiated resolution is strongly discouraged. Actions resulting in violence will not be in the best interests of the people of Honduras.[560]

Remarkable, indeed, that Kent's statement should emphasize the need for restraint from Zelaya; the statement did not even once condemn the coup regime for its ongoing campaign of violence and repression.

Through July and September, Peter Kent consistently chided Manuel Zelaya for "recklessly" attempting to re-enter the country of which he was the legal head-of-state, and insisted that he and his supporters negotiate a settlement in good faith with the coup regime, again misleadingly suggesting that Zelaya and the Resistance bore some responsibility for the crisis and that the coup regime was in a legitimate bargaining position. This presentation of events was repeated often, both in international statements and in the domestic media: for instance, in July, Peter Kent told the CBC that Zelaya's attempts to re-enter the country were "very unhelpful," a remarkable statement given that Canada still recognized Zelaya as the legal president with six months left in his term.[561] All the while, Kent's statements carefully avoided any direct criticism of the coup regime, repeatedly "calling on all parties to show restraint" and implicitly blamed Zelaya and the FNRP for the violence that was being inflicted on them. When Zelaya returned to Honduras in September and was barricaded into the Brazilian embassy, Kent's statement expressed concern with "the violence that erupted in the aftermath of President

[560] D-FAIT, "Statement by Minister of State Kent on the Situation in Honduras," No. 200, July 19, 2009.
[561] Grahame Russell, "In Response to Mr. Peter Kent: Canada's Increasingly Complicit Role in Honduras," *The Dominion*, Aug. 2, 2009.

Zelaya's *sudden* return to Honduras."[562] The emphasis on the word "sudden" is mine, as it implies that the irregularity of the situation should be attributed to Zelaya, as if the violence that was unleashed by the repressive coup government was caused by Zelaya's "sudden" action, not the rather sudden kidnapping of a President and fabrication and forgery of his resignation letter.

All the while, Canada endorsed a Costa Rica-brokered negotiation between Zelaya and the coup regime, but it was evident from the start that the coup regime had no intentions of letting go of power; the negotiation served to stall for time while the regime prepared for the November elections, which would provide a more satisfactory "resolution" to the crisis. Canada repeatedly invoked the negotiations as the best way forward, ignoring the fact that one side of the negotiations was a body that had seized dictatorial control over the country, and showed no intentions of relinquishing that control.[563] Predictably, the talks broke down, not long before the scheduled elections but what was perhaps most interesting about Canada's encouragement of the negotiations was the fact that the emphasis on this process allowed for an important shift in Canada's language about the coup itself; by October, it was no longer being called a "coup" but, rather, a "political crisis." An October 9 statement referenced the "political crisis" fully six times, without one mention of a coup d'etat, after which point Canada never again referred to a "coup" at all.[564]

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[562] D-FAIT, "Canada Calls For Restraint and a Negotiated Settlement in Honduras," No. 268, Sept. 22, 2009. (Emphasis added.)
[563] D-FAIT, "Canada Committed to Advance Peaceful and Prompt Resolution of Political Crisis," No. 298, Oct. 7, 2009.
[564] D-FAIT, "Canada Plays Leadership Role in OAS Efforts to Initiate Dialogue in Honduras," No. 303, Oct. 9, 2009.

Nevertheless, it was the November "elections" that provided the key opportunity for Canada to open wide its arms to the coup regime. Even before the process took place, with international organizations refusing to send observers to what was so transparently an undemocratic process, Canada laid the groundwork for its support in a remarkable statement:

> Canada is disappointed with the lack of progress on the implementation of the Tegucigalpa-San José Accord, signed by both parties on October 30. Unfortunately, this has meant that Canada could not provide support for the electoral process. Although the elections will be watched closely by the international community and members of civil society, there will be no formal observation missions from the Organization of American States or the UN.
>
> The peaceful conduct of the November 29 elections will be an important step in moving out of the current political impasse. For the sake of all Hondurans, we urge that they be run freely and fairly, in a safe and secure environment. Although the circumstances under which elections will take place are less than ideal, Canada calls strongly for a peaceful electoral process free from violence.[565]

It is an astonishing feat of doublespeak that allows Kent to simultaneously acknowledge that the international community is refusing to formally observe the elections – in clear recognition of their illegitimacy – while he *also* insists that the process will be a key step in resolving the "political crisis." It certainly begs the question, how could illegitimate elections move forward a process of re-asserting electoral representative democracy?

As the predictably fraudulent results came in, it became clear that Porfirio "Pepe" Lobo, of the National Party, was to be given the Presidency. In contrast to his tardy response to the coup in June, this time Peter Kent was the first foreign minister to offer his congratulations to Lobo, who lost the 2006 elections to Zelaya and had been a strong

[565] D-FAIT, "Minster of State Kent Calls for Peaceful Elections in Honduras," No. 360, Nov. 27, 2009.

supporter of the coup. In his statement, Kent lauded the Honduran people for engaging in "relatively peaceful and orderly" elections, run "freely and fairly, with a strong turnout, and with no major violence."[566] Given the military and police lockdown, the massive, daily demonstrations, the complete silence of what was left of the critical Honduran press, and the political graffiti that covered nearly every edifice in every corner of the capital, it seemed utterly absurd to suggest that Honduras had just witnessed free, peaceful, fair elections. Indeed, the reality was quite the contrary, as documented in a series of accounts I published at the time.[567]

But the fabrication of legitimate elections in 2009 was the basis for Canada's re-engagement with Honduras during Lobo's first year. On January 27, 2010, Lobo was inaugurated as Honduran President while over half a million people protested in the streets – the second largest public demonstration since the June 2009 coup. Most of the Honduran media refused to cover the demonstrations; one station that attempted to show the size of the protest, found that the military prevented its rented helicopter, designed to assist capturing images from above, from taking off.[568] In the weeks prior to Lobo's inauguration, coup-leader Roberto Micheletti was declared a member of Congress for the rest of his life, an unprecedented and absurd appointment for a nominally democratic body, and immediately after Lobo took office he successfully proposed and passed legal immunity for all of the military leaders of the coup.[569]

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[566] D-FAIT, "Canada Congratulates Honduran People on Elections," Dec. 1, 2009.
[567] Álvaro Cálix, "Honduras: de la crisis política al surgimiento de un nuevo social actor," *Nueva Sociedad*, No. 226, April/May 2010. I also documented this period, at the time, in a series of detailed reports for *Canadian Dimension*. See Tyler Shipley, "They Are Afraid of Us, Because We Are Not Afraid," *Canadian Dimension*, November 24, 2009.
[568] Annie Bird, "Disappearing Truth in Honduras: Commissions Cover Up Demands for New Constitution," *Upside Down World*, April 13, 2010.
[569] "Declaran a Micheletti diputado vitalicio," *La Tribuna*, January 14, 2010.

Peter Kent quickly offered Canada's congratulations, thanked Lobo for "generously" providing once-President Zelaya safe passage to exile in the Dominican Republic and dispensed the usual distortions, calling the military coup a "political crisis" and calling Lobo's regime a "unity government,"[570] perhaps because Lobo appointed three cabinet positions to individuals like César Ham who were once associated with the left, alongside the hardliners – some with long records of involvement in human rights abuses – who received most of the appointments.[571]

Meanwhile, Kent's statement was silent on the assassination of Walter Trochez, a 27 year old LGBT activist who had been documenting human rights abuses by the coup regime, just weeks prior to Lobo's inauguration. Kent's silence on this is made even more unbelievable by the fact that the U.S. State Department had issued a statement just three days earlier demanding an investigation into Trochez's death. If this wasn't enough, Peter Kent's statement congratulating Pepe Lobo was published on the same day that he published another public statement, this time on Venezuela. In light of the behaviour Kent so staunchly defended in Pepe Lobo, and his silence on the assassinations of Walter Trochez and so many others, his statement on Chávez looks patently absurd:

> Canada is concerned over the Venezuelan government's recent suspension of broadcasting of six television stations and the death of two students in protests related to this action. These events are further evidence of a shrinking democratic space in Venezuela. Freedom of expression, and access to information from a wide range of sources, are fundamental elements of a healthy democracy. Canada urges the government of Venezuela to immediately restore the transmissions of the six affected stations.[572]

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[570] D-FAIT, "Statement by Minister of State Kent on Inauguration of Honduran President," January 28, 2010.
[571] Annie Bird, "Disappearing Truth in Honduras: Commissions Cover Up Demands for New Constitution," *Upside Down World*, April 13, 2010.
[572] D-FAIT, "Canada Concerned Over Venezuelan Suspension of TV Stations," January 28, 2010.

Even if we accept Kent's basic information on Venezuela as accurate – which should not be taken for granted – that which is called "shrinking democratic space" in Venezuela is labelled "a process of renewal" in Honduras.[573] Indeed, as Todd Gordon and Jeffrey Webber reported, Kent's trip to Venezuela in January 2010 saw him meet with a variety of groups in the far-right opposition to the Chávez government, though he was unable to find time to meet with a single representative of the official government.[574] In a remarkable reversal, his time in Honduras less than a month later had him meet with not just Pepe Lobo but also three of his cabinet ministers, including Arturo Corrales (former spokesperson of coup-leader Roberto Micheletti) and Mario Canahuati (son of *maquiladora* magnate Juan Canahuati and former-president of COHEP). Nonetheless, Kent did not meet with any of the myriad community and civil society organizations documenting – and often experiencing – the violence and terrorization being perpetrated

[573] It is outside the scope of this project to assess the relative freedom of the Venezuelan media. But a few quick observations are necessary here: first, like in Honduras, the Venezuelan media is primarily owned and operated in the private sector, by Venezuelan oligarchs for whom the Chávez government has become a bitter enemy. The Venezuelan media was complicit in attempts to have Chávez overthrown in 2002, and as a result, Chávez has enforced strict controls over the behaviour of private media. In light of the blatant manipulation and mischaracterization of the news that emanates from the private media in Venezuela, some extent of control against that seems hardly inappropriate. Nonetheless, it is undeniable that any censorship – even when it may be partially justified – presents a troubling precedent and, as such, there is no simple answer to the problem between Chávez and the media. That said, much can – and should – be made of Canada's asymmetrical responses to Chávez shutting down the right wing media in Venezuela and Lobo shutting down the left wing media in Honduras. While there was stony silence as left journalists were being assassinated in Honduras, Canada was up in arms over the shut down of TV stations in Venezuela; liberal Canada got right in on the action, as not just private media but also the CBC took advantage of the excuse to hammer the Chávez government. For instance, Jian Ghomeshi of CBC's *Radio Q* hosted a sanctimonious program with Elias Bitar – whose RCTV station in Venezuela violated laws passed by the Chávez government and was shut down – decrying the censorship of the media in Venezuela. But for all his haughtiness on Venezuela, Ghomeshi has never bothered to interview Honduran journalists who have faced brutal and immediate violence for their work. For his part, President Chávez responded that he wouldn't take advice from a right-wing government that had recently closed its parliament, referring to Stephen Harper's "proroguing" of parliament between December 30, 2009 and March 3, 2010, to avoid discussion of Canadian military abuses in Afghanistan.

[574] In fact, meetings with the actual government of Venezuela weren't even on the itinerary. D-FAIT, "Minister of State Kent to Visit Venezuela and Bolivia," No. 31, January 19, 2010.

by the state.[575] Justifying his aggressive statements on Venezuela, Kent told the press, "in the past, our obsession with consensus and resolving differences within the [OAS] has sometimes meant that countries don't speak out against those who are less diligent in defending the principles of democracy [for] which we all officially pledged to defend." This is an extraordinarily hypocritical statement in light of Canada's relationship to a regime in Honduras that took power by military force.[576]

There was, further, a perverse irony in Kent's sanctimony with regard to the alleged repression of the press in Caracas. The veteran journalist-turned-Minister never once bothered to speak of the complete crackdown on the Honduran press after the coup which saw all news outlets, TV, radio and print, forced to choose between supporting the coup or being shut-down, sometimes violently. *Radio Globo*, as noted above, was (and remains) under constant harassment since the coup and during Pepe Lobo's administration; its offices were ransacked in September 2009, its signal was disrupted on numerous occasions in 2009 and 2010, and its reporters were consistently attacked.[577] For instance, "*Tras la Verdad*" (Seeking the Truth) was one of *Globo*'s most popular shows and was very critical of the coup regime; it's host, Luis Galdámez, was shot on September 4, 2010, by gunmen outside his home in Tegucigalpa. He survived the attack, but as he said on the air shortly thereafter, "the threats are constant, the persecution is

[575] Todd Gordon and Jeffrey Webber, "Canada's Long Embrace of the Honduran Dictatorship," *The Bullet* No. 330, March 20, 2010.
[576] Peter Kent, quoted in Cindy Chan, "Minister Kent defends free speech rights in Venezuela," *Epoch Times*, February 9, 2010.
[577] An incomplete list of the names of assassinated journalists that year includes Gabriel Fino Noriega, Joseph Hernandez Ochoa, David Meza Montesinos, Nahum Palacios, Jose Bayardo Mayrena, Manuel Juarez, Jorge Alberto Orellana, Luis Arturo Mondragon, and Israel Zelaya Diaz.

constant."[578] Felix Molina, one of Honduras' most popular radio journalists and a firm supporter of the FNRP, told me that he has to be careful not to be photographed so that the authorities cannot link his face to his name.[579] These are striking illustrations of how much democratic space had shrunk in Honduras, where even at the height of the violence of the 1980s, mainstream newspapers still felt empowered and willing to report on people "disappeared" by death squads like Battalion 3-16.[580]

But Canada's support for the regime that was violently clamping down on the media was steadfast, even when it bordered on the absurd. On February 20, 2010, Peter Kent concluded a series of meetings with Pepe Lobo, about which I will say more in chapter 7, and described his time in Honduras as a "fruitful visit," praising Lobo's efforts towards "national reconciliation":

> I have had a very fruitful visit to Honduras, where I had the opportunity to meet with President Porfirio Lobo and personally congratulate him on becoming President of Honduras. We are pleased to see that President Lobo is beginning the process of national reconciliation, including supporting the formation of a truth commission. This is an important step in healing the wounds created by the recent political impasse and for Hondurans to regain a sense of trust in their country's democratic institutions.[581]

The day after Kent's statement was published, Claudia Larisa Brizuela, daughter of a critical Honduran radio journalist and union organizer, was assassinated on the front steps of her house in San Pedro Sula, killed in retribution for her father's involvement in the

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[578] Luis Galdámez, quoted in Jackie B. Diaz, "Freedom of the Press Threatened in Honduras," *Infosurhoy*, March 23, 2011. Available at: http://www.infosurhoy.com/cocoon/saii/xhtml/en_GB/features/saii/features/main/2011/03/22/feature-01

[579] Interview with Felix Molina, May 2, 2012.

[580] Pine, 51.

[581] D-FAIT, "Minister of State Kent Concludes Successful Visit to Honduras," February 22, 2010.

peaceful resistance to the coup.[582] Canada issued no statements on Brizuela's murder, and the pro-coup Honduran newspaper *La Tribuna* insisted that the police were "hot on the trail" of gang members suspected of the killing, though it was obvious to her father, Pedro Brizuela, that she was targeted in order to silence him.

Indeed, the weeks leading up to Kent's "fruitful visit" were particularly bloody in Honduras. Kent's statement was released on February 20; consider events that preceded it. On February 3, the body of Vanessa Zepeda Alonzo, anti-coup activist in the Social Security Employees Union, was thrown out of a car in Tegucigalpa. On February 15, gunmen on motorcycles shot to death Julio Fúnez Benítez, an active member of the Workers Union of Aqueducts and Sewer System (SANAA) outside his home in Brisas de Olancho, Tegucigalpa. On February 17, critical journalist Enrique Gudiel, from Danlí, found his seventeen-year-old daughter Dara dead. He had already been given a warning to end his critical broadcasts; his daughter had been kidnapped once before. When Gudiel found her the second time, she had been hanged. Strange fruit, indeed, that Canada's representative was endorsing in Honduras.[583]

Violent retribution for anti-coup journalism became an expected risk of doing the work after June 2009, and it was particularly pronounced in the early part of Pepe Lobo's government. Despite reporting his regular death threats to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) while covering the ongoing agrarian conflicts in the Aguán Valley, Nahún Palacios was shot repeatedly in his car on March 14, 2010 by

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[582] Belén Fernandez, "Honduran newspaper discovers murder after 3 days," *Pulse Media*, February 27, 2010.

[583] The reader will, I hope, forgive my use of Peter Kent's words to draw out the twisted irony of Canada's disingenuous statements. "Strange Fruit" was, of course, the title of Billie Holiday's famous song, written by American Marxist Abel Meeropol in 1936 in response to the continued practice of White Supremacist lynchings in the American South. That Peter Kent should describe his visit to Honduras as 'fruitful,' just three days after a young girl was hanged in a politically motivated killing, should be a reminder of the macabre indifference with which imperial powers regard the victims of their machinations.

gunmen with AK-47s. Nine months earlier, on June 30, 2009 – just two days after the coup – Honduran soldiers had broken into his home and held his children at gunpoint while destroying his video equipment. No proper investigation was conducted into his death, and his body was exhumed in August 2010 with the case left "unsolved." Palacios was news director at *Aguán Television Canal 5*, and had covered FNRP events and the repression of poor farmers by prominent *golpista* Miguel Facussé.[584]

ONGOING REPRESSION – CAMPESINOS, TEACHERS, ACTIVISTS

All of this had to be selectively and wilfully ignored in order for Canada to maintain its position in support of the Lobo government, and the above description is but a small piece of the overall picture of repression that has characterized Honduras under the coup regime. Indeed, direct targeting of movement activists is not the only form that the violence has taken; the rupture of the rule of law at the highest level accelerated the breakdown of all civil society institutions that worked to limit the aggression of local and foreign oligarchs, such that the capitalist classes and armed forces have been able to crack down on any person or group that threatens their interests – whether directly linked to the FNRP or not – with impunity. An illustrative example can be found in the ongoing conflict between *campesino* communities in the Aguán Valley and the estate of Miguel Facussé, a member of one of Honduras' most powerful families and one of the central figures behind the coup. Members of the peasant community of Guadalupe Carney were asserting their access to land to which they believed they had a legal right, but that had been forcibly taken over by Facussé. In fact, according to a FIAN-Honduras document of November 16, 2010, the land was bought in 1977 – illegally according to the Constitution

[584] Sandra Cuffe, "The Snakes Sleep: Attacks against the Media and Impunity in Honduras," *Upside Down World,* November 23, 2010.

at the time – by a U.S. citizen who was forced to turn the land over to the Honduran government in 1983 for the construction of a joint U.S.-Honduran military base. When the base – which had been used to train Honduran military in torture techniques[585] – was dismantled, the land was sold to wealthy cattle ranchers, despite protestations in the community that the land was owned by the state and legally ought to be turned over to landless peasants through INA, the national agrarian institute. In 1993, after much struggle, the state formally agreed to distribute the land in question among landless *campesinos* in the region, but the cattle ranchers who had moved in did not cede the land and the state refused to confront them, leaving *campesino* groups to defend their land on their own against the powerful and wealthy oligarchs who routinely used private security companies to attack and harass *campesinos*.[586]

Not surprisingly, this already dangerous conflict for Honduran *campesinos* was made far worse by the June 2009 coup, as its architects were members of the same oligarchy that dominates the Aguán Valley. Indeed, Miguel Facussé – one of Pepe Lobo's closest associates – occupies several hundred acres in the region and his hired guns have showed little restraint in efforts to evict the *campesinos*; in November 2010, four activists in the *Movimiento Unificado Campesino del Aguán* (MUCA) were killed by private security guards – some of them ex-paramilitaries from Colombia – working for Facussé.[587] The attack, which also left four people wounded and two "disappeared," was carried out as part of an eviction of members of MUCA claiming their legal right to the

[585] Peter Lackowski, "A State of Siege in Northern Honduras: Land, Palm Oil and Media," *Upside Down World*, November 30, 2010.
[586] FIAN-Honduras, "Violence and Death in the Aguán Valley," Nov. 16, 2010.
[587] In October 2009, the UN Special Rapporteur on the use of mercenaries reported that Honduran landowners had hired 40 members of the Self Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC), classified as a terrorist organization by the US government.

land. Yet, Honduran police did not arrive until the violent eviction was in its eighth hour, and they did nothing to assist the MUCA activists; the end result of the arrival of police was the completion of the eviction and the maintenance of Facussé's occupation of the land.[588]

MUCA had spent nearly a decade building up its legal case around the land, but it consistently found that whenever its cases came close to bearing fruit, the prosecutors in question would be bribed and the cases would be thrown out. Nevertheless, MUCA grew in strength and continued to file lawsuits and stage demonstrations, including a dramatic 36 hour occupation by some 500 *campesinos* of a key stretch of highway in February 2006, just a few days after Manuel Zelaya took office.[589] MUCA was able to reach an agreement with the Zelaya government to have the situation properly investigated and, unlike his predecessors, Zelaya appeared to be making good on his promises.[590] MUCA maintained its pressure – occupying one of Facussé's African palm processing plants on June 8, 2009 – and as of June 12, 2009, MUCA had a second agreement with Zelaya to have a detailed legal report on MUCA's claim to the land within thirty days. When I spoke to Joni Rivas, one of MUCA's co-directors, in May 2012, he was quick to note that although MUCA had been vocally and publicly demanding action from the Zelaya government, they had to acknowledge that his administration had been somewhat receptive to those demands. On June 19, 2009, Zelaya visited the Aguán personally, to guarantee that the land would be returned to the *campesinos*, and the oligarchy responded

[588] FIAN-Honduras, "Violence and Death in the Aguán Valley," Nov. 16, 2010.
[589] Interview with Joni Rivas, May 3, 2012.
[590] Peter Lackowski, "A State of Siege in Northern Honduras: Land, Palm Oil and Media," *Upside Down World*, November 30, 2010.

with an assassination attempt against Fabio Ochoa, a lawyer working on MUCA's case, on June 23, 2009.[591]

Five days later, Zelaya was overthrown and the coup regime subsequently reversed all of the progress made under Zelaya by the simple introduction of overwhelming physical force including, in one case, the complete physical destruction of an entire community. On July 13, 2011, Amnesty International's Canadian office issued an urgent call for support for the victims of military/police attacks against the community of Rigores, which had left some 500 people homeless and displaced:

> The eviction order was issued on May 23, but the community was not informed. The police arrived in Rigores at 10 am on June 24 and told community members that they had two hours to pack up and leave. At around 2 pm, the police began to destroy communal buildings, people's homes and their belongings. Nobody was offered alternative housing, resettlement or access to productive land, or compensation, either in advance of or since the eviction. Nor was anyone guaranteed safe access to tend their crops, many of which were destroyed during the eviction.
>
> Around 80 people, mainly women and children, have taken shelter in the Rigores Community Centre, about 3 km away. The centre is not designed for people to live in. The building is overcrowded, and lets in rainwater, leaving half the building constantly wet. The centre has very few toilets and washing facilities. The community members, particularly young children, are at risk of disease. The community depends on the land from which they were evicted in Rigores for their survival.[592]

Despite Amnesty's efforts, the repression went on without interruption; just days after the Amnesty report, on July 17, 2011, two more *campesinos* from MUCA were killed. The following week, on July 23, 2011, one of MUCA's leaders, Julian Alvarenga, was killed in a marketplace where he was buying food with a friend, who was also wounded in the

[591] Interview with Joni Rivas, May 3, 2012.
[592] "Update and Action for the *Campesinos* of Rigores, Aguán" *Honduras Resiste*, July 13, 2011.

attack.[593] As of my May 2012 interview with Joni Rivas, MUCA reported that hundreds of its members had been detained and charged with crimes – often theft – and fifty-six *campesinos* had been assassinated by paramilitaries, police and military in the service of large landowners like Facussé.[594]

The Lobo government has also targeted Honduran teachers, whose 65,000-member union, the *Federación de Organizaciones Magisteriales de Honduras* (FOMH), has been among Honduras' strongest and most defiant civil society sectors over the past decade. Between 1997-2009, teachers managed to pressure four consecutive governments into writing, signing and actually implementing the Teachers' Statute, which institutionalized regular pay increases and benefits.[595] As noted above, the teachers' unions were instrumental in pushing Manuel Zelaya to adopt a number of reform-minded positions, they were important in the building of the CNRP, and in the aftermath of the coup the teachers have often occupied crucial roles in the FNRP. Between June 2009 and June 2011, teachers engaged in a variety of job actions, including a hunger strike in June 2010 to protest firings of school officials connected to the FNRP,[596] and two major strikes in August and October of that same year in response to

[593] "Latest News," *Honduras Resiste*, July 23, 2011.
[594] This number, however, is still growing and, as such, successive drafts of this chapter yield higher figures each time. In a September 2012 draft, I had to include the assassinations of two lawyers who were handling MUCA's cases, Antonio Trejo Cabrera and Manuel Eduardo Díaz Mazariegos. It is also, as always, the lowest possible estimate since many deaths can only be indirectly attributed to political repression. It also excludes the many people victimized as a result of circumstances created by the violence and insecurity, as in the case of five Honduran Pepsi employees, killed on August 15, 2011, by security guards who mistook them for members of MUCA.
[595] Daniel Altschuler, "Between Resistance and Co-optation: The Politics of Education in the Honduran Crisis" in *NACLA Report on the Americas*, Vol. 43, No. 2, March/April 2010, pp. 23-29.
[596] Kari Lydersen, "Fired for Opposing Coup, Honduran Educators Go On Hunger Strike," *Working In These Times*, July 5, 2010.

the Lobo governments' refusal to pay millions of dollars in back pay and an estimated $159 million in "missing" pension money.[597]

Predictably, the repression has fallen hard on the teachers. They have been among the most regularly targeted for state violence; popular high school teacher Blas López was discovered dead from gunshot wounds on January 30, 2010, just three days after Pepe Lobo was inaugurated. In March 2010, well-known teacher and activist José Manuel Flores was shot to death in front of his students at the high school where he taught.[598] A year later, on March 18, 2011, Ilse Ivania Velázquez Rodriguez was killed during a police attack on the offices of the *Instituto Nacional de Previsión del Magisterio* (INPREMA), which the teachers had occupied to demand the millions of dollars owed to their pension fund.[599] Alongside the campaign of violence, Lobo and his associates used their domination of the Honduran media to paint a masterful smear campaign against the teachers, calling their strikes "human rights violations" and suggesting that the teachers were akin to terrorists.[600] The public campaign against the teachers helped spur on the creation of largely pro-coup parents' organizations[601] that helped bring momentum to the regime's clamp down by de-legitimizing the teachers' demands; that is, teachers were

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[597] Kari Lydersen, "Angered by President 'Pepe,' Teachers Strike Again in Honduras" *Working In These Times*, Nov. 5, 2010.

[598] Maquila Solidarity Network, "New Wave of Repression Targets Opponents of Honduran Coup," *The Bullet*, May 6, 2010.

[599] According to COFADEH, police reported the death as caused by a 'traffic accident.' In fact, Velázquez Rodriguez was part of a group of teachers attacked by police during a peaceful demonstration; as police fired tear gas into the crowd, people became asphyxiated and confused and a forced evacuation route became blocked. In the melee, Velázquez Rodriguez was hit in the face by a tear gas canister, knocking her out; she fell to the street and while laying unconscious on Boulevard Francia, she was hit by a car. As such, COFADEH declares Velázquez Rodriguez a victim of state repression, not a traffic accident. Honduras Resiste, "Urgent Action from COFADEH," June 16, 2011.

[600] Kari Lydersen, "Angered by President 'Pepe,' Teachers Strike Again in Honduras" *Working In These Times*, Nov. 5, 2010.

[601] Some, like the *Federación de Asociaciones de Padres y Madres de Familia por la Educación de Honduras* (FAPAMEH) have made efforts to present themselves as 'politically neutral' and interested only in bettering the Honduran education system, while others like *Volvamos a Clases* ("Let's Return to Class") are transparently pro-coup and anti-union.

criticized in the context of their particular material struggles – around the underfunded, understaffed and overstretched education system – and this made it easier for the regime to delegitimate the broader coup resistance, in which they played a crucial role. The mobilization of public anger towards the teachers was manifest in direct and sometimes violent actions by parents against teachers' strikes, and made it easier for the state to justify it's own crackdowns on teachers in the resistence.[602]

Meanwhile, far from reining in the violence, the Lobo government increasingly facilitated and encouraged it through a series of new laws that emboldened the already deeply repressive apparatus. In November 2010, the regime passed new 'anti-terrorist' laws, which criminalized a variety of movement organizations and severely restricted rights of free association. In the months that followed, Congress amended the constitution to allow police to forcibly enter peoples' homes without a warrant and to detain people without charge for up to 48 hours.[603] With help from its North American partners, the Honduran regime drafted and passed a related law that empowered the police and armed forces to intercept peoples' private communications for surveillance.[604] What is more, extensions to the definition of the crime of "sedition" allowed the Honduran police, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR), to arrest anyone "engaged in actions with a political dimension, such as painting graffiti with a political message or the simple act of participating in a political demonstration."[605] Lobo also proposed the creation of a new tax on businesses but, rather than use it to moderately re-distribute wealth, he intended to earmark the money for

[602] Daniel Altschuler, "Between Resistance and Co-optation: The Politics of Education in the Honduran Crisis" in *NACLA Report on the Americas*, Vol. 43, No. 2, March/April 2010, pp. 23-29.
[603] Gordon and Webber, "From Cartagena to Tegucigalpa..."
[604] Interview with Felix Molina, May 2, 2012.
[605] Peace Brigades International, "Report of the Short-Term Mission to Honduras," October 2011.

increased security costs. The proposal has taken different forms and it remains unclear exactly how it will look when it is passed; at one point, the proposal was to place a 2% tax on the profits of mining companies, later it was amended to affect anyone who had over L150,000 in their bank accounts. Whatever it ends up looking like, the tax is meant to cover Lobo's commitment to the police of an additional L1.5 billion in each of the next five years. The point, as Felix Molina puts it, is that it will reinforce the relationship whereby "the oligarchy pays for the police force it wants."[606]

Things have, predictably, only gotten worse for groups and individuals either connected to the social movement or engaged in any activity that could undermine the interests of the oligarchy, the *narco* gangs, the state, or the armed forces. In February 2011, COFADEH published the following update:

> On the 25th of February, 2011, at 8:13pm, José Trinidad Sánchez, [Executive Director of the Network for Alternative Community Trade (COMAL)], received a text message on his cellphone with the following text: "Trinidad WE KNOW WHERE YOU ARE YOU LIVE IN EL PORVENIR your days are limited so enjoy what you have robbed from Comal as of today count down your days you are being watched you dog." This is not the first act against Trinidad or the members of his family. In August, 2010, his 25-year-old son Jorge Luis... was detained and subject to mistreatment by agents of the Preventative Police who accused him of being Cuban. After hitting his head against a wall, handcuffing him and throwing him against the sidewalk, they expelled him from the department and ordered him not to return.[607]

I spoke with Trinidad in 2009 when the COMAL offices were first ransacked by the military (as described in Chapter 5) and as we surveyed the damage he told me, "we

[606] Interview with Felix Molina, May 2, 2012.
[607] COFADEH, "Urgent Action: Human Rights Defender Threatened and Given Ultimatum," March 7, 2011.

represent the poorest people here. We help them to sell their product, but we also teach them why they are poor. For this, we are a threat."[608]

To be interpreted as a threat, then, is to be targeted for violence. Cases like that of Trinidad Sánchez are common, and the patterns are repeated in every sector that seems to present a challenge to the current order. Labour unions continued to be aggressively harassed by state violence, as on March 1, 2011, when an active member of the *Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Industria de la Bebida* (STIBYS) was shot in the face on his way to work; Eduardo Argueta Santos had recently denounced the systematic targeting of trade unionists.[609] In the same month, Miriam Miranda, renowned Garífuna activist and leader in OFRANEH, was arrested, beaten, and detained for hours without access to medical attention. In the litany of racially charged insults that she received from police, it was clear that the assault was politically motivated.[610] In February 2011, Annarela Velez was targeted because she was the vice-president of *C-Libre*, a civil liberties watchdog organization. Students who demanded free education were routinely attacked; in 2011, hundreds of students were incarcerated or charged with criminal offenses and many faced extreme violence, like 17-year old Nahun Alexander Guerra, who was killed on August 22, 2011.

Human rights observers themselves, not surprisingly, are directly targeted. In December 2011, COFADEH released a report that detailed the myriad ways that its work, and that of other human rights organizations, was being undermined, ranging from direct violence against human rights observers and advocates to attempts by the state to

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[608] Interview with José Trinidad Sánchez, November 28, 2009.
[609] U.S. Labor Education in the Americas Project (USLEAP), "Honduras News Labor Update," March 2011. Available at: http://www.usleap.org/files/Honduras%20News%20Labor%20Update_March.pdf
[610] Miriam Miranda, "Honduras: El golpe de Estado, sus herederos y la criminalización de la protesta social," *Honduras Resiste*, Mar. 29, 2011.

criminalize their organizations using the new anti-terrorist laws.[611] COFADEH's own staff, for instance, were regularly threatened and intimidated, and the patterns are often similar: text messages or phone calls that threatened violence against individuals and their loved ones, often containing personal information designed to show the victim that they have been watched. Victims are followed in the streets, by men on motorcycles or by vehicles with dark, tinted windows. Sometimes the vehicles will park outside peoples' homes and stay there for days. Other times the same vehicle will pass by a victim multiple times, daily, over a sustained period of time. Sometimes warning shots will be fired, or menacing messages will be left at peoples' homes, or armed men will actually force themselves into peoples' homes. The regularity with which these threats are followed up by actual physical attacks makes them genuinely and profoundly terrifying for the victims.[612]

Meanwhile, as of December 2011, over 650 human rights workers – individuals working feverishly to document this campaign of terror – were facing criminal charges as a result of their work. According to COFADEH:

> Defenders of human rights, especially women working in poor communities, are also themselves victims of abuse on the part of agents of the state. It has become common for the authorities to refuse to offer any protection and to fail to comply with their responsibility to investigate or sanction those responsible for the attacks.[613]

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[611] Claiming, for instance, that COFADEH's efforts to document the violence against organized *campesino* movements in the Aguán constitutes support for terrorist activities, since those groups are increasingly being labelled "terrorist" groups in order to justify their repression. COFADEH, "Informe: Situación de defensores de derechos humanos en Honduras," Tegucigalpa, December 2011.

[612] A quick scan of COFADEH's regular reports demonstrates these patterns and, indeed, when I've travelled and worked with COFADEH, FIAN and other human rights documenters, I've heard these types of stories over and over again.

[613] COFADEH, "Informe" p. 26.

Indeed, feminist and women's groups consistently report that their attempts to document and defend human rights abuses against women are met with open hostility from state authorities. Gladys Lanza, veteran activist in the women's movement in Honduras and president of the *Movimiento de Mujeres por la Paz "Visitación Padilla,"* described an example of the routine violence she and her colleagues face:

> We live in fear. We can't go out at night. One woman who works here [documenting violence against women] was assaulted right in front of our building. We took a video of the assault to the police and they did nothing. She was badly beaten, her clothes were ripped, she had bruises on her arms, her things were taken. But the police did nothing.[614]

This is not an exceptional situation but, rather, it is the norm. Organizers and workers in the women's organization *Centro de Estudio de la Mujer – Honduras* (CEM-H) were, for instance, constantly harassed and intimidated by armed men who followed them on motorcycles, entered their homes without warrants, and sent threatening messages, while they tried to organize demonstrations around the Day Against Violence Against Women in 2010. The demonstrations, too, were subjected to repressive violence from local and national authorities.[615]

What is more, the extreme violence meted out by the state, since 2009, exacerbated already-existing patterns of violence in Honduras, some of which I discussed in Chapter 4. Gladys Lanza reports that after the coup, violence against women rose by 50%; in 2009, there were 108 women murdered *before* the June 2009 coup, but over 300 women were murdered between July and December. These figures only represent those women who were killed; they do not include the tens of thousands of women who were beaten, raped, tortured or subjected to other forms of violence. According to Lanza:

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[614] Interview with Gladys Lanza, May 7, 2012.
[615] COFADEH, "Informe," p. 27.

> [In 2010], there were more than 18,000 complaints of domestic violence. Most of these are never dealt with at all; of the 18,000, over 11,000 were never even investigated. This tells us that women are not guaranteed any safety in this country. We discover that the police are involved in organized crime – how is a woman facing violence going to trust the police? Many times it is in the very police stations where they are attacked and raped.[616]

The grafting of direct political violence onto a pre-existing matrix of social violence is a crucial piece in understanding this moment in Honduras, and is perhaps best exemplified in the acceleration of the extra judicial killings of youths, as described in Chapter 4. Though the killings received a fair bit of attention in the late 1990s, this violence actually persisted throughout the 2000s; Casa Alianza reports that between 1998 and 2009 there were 4999 violent deaths of youths under 23 years of age. After the coup d'etat, the numbers of youth killings shot up even higher; in 2008, a total of 2154 youths were killed, but in 2009, the total reached 2578.[617] As in the case of violence against women, then, the coup served to invigorate and empower the forces of reaction; an existing culture of impunity for killing urban poor youth was buttressed by an example of impunity at the highest level, and the endorsement of violence and the entrenchment of the Honduran right made it easy for the definition of the "dangerous youth" to be expanded to encompass political activists, so that violence against *both* politicized and non-politicized youth increased. In an important document analyzing this violence, as it occurs across Central America, Claudia Virginia Samayoa *et al* describe this dynamic and the concurrent response:

> In the context of a constitutional and institutional rupture, Honduran youth have begun to confront the reality that this ongoing problem raises a series of challenges for the youth and

[616] Interview with Gladys Lanza, May 7, 2012.
[617] Virginia Samayoa et al., 227.

> for the population in general. In this context, the youth and the popular organizations and the parties and movements of the left in opposition to the de facto government are added to the balance of forces in resistance, manifest in the growth of democratic, progressive and leftist tendencies. This new block came together after June 2009 and caught the attention of the state security forces, which have focused their repression systematically and selectively against this sector of the population.[618]

Indeed, while liberal observers from the Global North often demand to see specific, verifiable cases and figures for "political killings" or "coup-related violence," the reality is that the coup served to exacerbate existing and ongoing violence and further blur the distinction between "political" and "common" criminality, such that a neat separation of these categories is neither possible nor analytically meaningful.

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION?

In light of the overview I have just provided with respect to the complicated and ongoing repressive campaign pursued by the Lobo regime throughout its term in office, one can only reflect on the regime's creation of a so-called Truth and Reconciliation Commission with rather mirthless irony. The Commission was passed into Honduran law on April 13, 2010, and held its "investigations" between May 4, 2010 and July 7, 2011, concurrent to the repression documented above, and it was widely and immediately discredited as another sham for the whitewashing of the regime – how can there be reconciliation when the crimes are ongoing? On the day the Commission was inaugurated, Bertha Oliva of COFADEH noted that the Presidential decree that established the commission did not even deign to admit that what happened in June 2009 was, in fact, a coup d'etat. She added that any meaningful attempt to bring reconciliation of any kind would require that all sides of a dispute be included in the process; naturally,

[618] Virginia Samayoa et al., 229. (Translated from Spanish. All translations by the author unless otherwise indicated.)

Lobo handpicked the commissioners to ensure that the results came out favourably for the *golpistas*.[619] That COFADEH – and countless other groups that opposed the coup – continued to face daily, violent repression while the Commission conducted its inquiry made the legitimacy of its "findings" a laughable proposition.

Undaunted by, or wilfully ignorant of, Bertha Oliva's comments, Canada enthusiastically supported the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and was eager to send a representative to sit on the commission. Said Peter Kent:

> Canada strongly supports the creation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The commission is essential to advancing the process of national reconciliation and dialogue across all sectors in Honduras. Its work will also help Hondurans regain confidence in their democratic institutions.[620]

Indeed, not only did Canada provide political support for the commission, it offered logistical support by sending Canadian corporate law consultant Michael Kergin to sit as a commissioner. Peter Kent's office announced its congratulations to Kergin, noting, with brazen disregard for reality, that "Canada was deeply involved in all efforts to reach a peaceful, negotiated solution to the political impasse in Honduras, and has committed to assisting the country with its reconciliation process."[621] On Kergin, Kent added:

> Canadian participation in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is a clear reflection of Canada's commitment to the Americas. Mr. Kergin is a distinguished Canadian diplomat with extensive experience in the Americas and in the promotion of Canadian values of democracy and human rights. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission will greatly benefit from his contribution.[622]

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[619] Bertha Oliva, "A Real Truth Commission for Honduras," May 4, 2010.
[620] DFAIT, "Canada Supports Creation of Honduras Truth and Reconciliation Commission," April 15, 2010.
[621] DFAIT, "Canada Supports Creation of Honduras Truth and Reconciliation Commission," April 15, 2010.
[622] DFAIT, "Canada Supports Creation of Honduras Truth and Reconciliation Commission," April 15, 2010.

"Distinguished" is precisely how corporate law firm Bennett-Jones described Michael Kergin when it hired him earlier in 2009 to be a senior consultant. "Mr. Kergin has had a distinguished career in public service," said CEO Hugh McKinnon,[623] whose firm specializes in matters related to energy and resource-extraction companies and describes itself as having a "sterling profile as the leading energy and natural resources firm in the country."[624] However, what distinguishes Michael Kergin most – with respect to his role on the Honduran Truth Commission – must be his connection to another infamous Latin American coup d'etat: the 1973 overthrow of Chilean President Salvador Allende. Kergin joined Canada's foreign service in 1967 and in the 1970s he was posted in New York, Cameroon and, most notably, in Chile. It is worth pausing briefly to reflect on Canada's foreign policy behaviour towards Chile during Kergin's era; when democratic elections came out in favour of openly Marxist-inspired Salvador Allende in 1970, Canada immediately suspended all foreign aid and petitioned the IMF to withdraw support from Chile. When Allende invited then Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau to Santiago, he refused. This remarkably hostile attitude towards a democratically elected government stood in stark contrast to Canada's position in 1973, when Allende was overthrown by a violent military coup. Within three weeks of the September 11 coup, as Gen. Augusto Pinochet consolidated power and fear and repression gripped the country, Canadian Ambassador Andrew Ross wrote to Ottawa:

> I can see no useful purpose to withholding recognition [of Pinochet's regime] unduly. Indeed, such action might even tend to delay Chile's eventual return to the democratic process.[625]

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[623] Hugh McKinnon, "Bennett-Jones Welcomes Michael Kergin As Senior Advisor," Jan 5, 2009.
[624] Bennett-Jones LLP, "Practices," available at http://www.bennettjones.com/Practices/ .
[625] Andrew Ross, quoted in Yves Engler, *The Black Book of Canadian Foreign Policy*, Fernwood, Black Point, 2009, p. 99-100.

That refusing to recognize a military regime on the basis of the illegality of its accession and the violence of its rule could be called "withholding recognition *unduly*" is remarkable in itself, as is the half-hearted hope for Chile's "eventual" return to democracy. Pinochet's dictatorship was one of the most notorious in recent Latin American history, and Canada's support for it certainly did not hasten the return to democracy; Pinochet held power for some 17 years and he died as a process had been set in motion to have him indicted by an international tribunal for crimes against humanity. But in 1973, Canada happily extended its arms to his regime, re-opening trade relations and foreign aid, which amounted to over $1 billion in aid and loans – including money loaned for the purpose of purchasing Canadian military technology for the state and its secret police agency (DINA) – and the same amount in direct foreign investment.[626]

While Kergin himself was likely only marginally involved in establishing Canadian policy towards Chile in this period, it is instructive to witness the similarities between Canada's position on Chile in the 1970s and its position in Honduras in the 2000s. Moreover, Kergin's institutional location and experience in Chile in the 1970s speaks volumes about the perspective he would bring to bear on the Honduran coup. Following his time in Chile, Kergin was named Canada's ambassador to Cuba, a post he held during 1986-1989,[627] a period in which Canada's continued relationship with Cuba has been characterized as one in which Canada largely served as the eyes and ears of the United States in hostile territory: U.S. state department officials acknowledged that Canada provided the best military intelligence it had on Cuba, as Canada's Communications Security Establishment (CSE) used the Canadian Embassy in Havana as

[626] Engler, 100-101.
[627] Government of Canada, "Michael Kergin," online profile at: http://www.canadainternational.gc.ca/washington/offices-bureaux/amb/kergin.aspx?view=d .

an interception point for the private communications of high-ranking Cuban officials.[628] After his time spying on Cuba, Kergin filled a variety of diplomatic posts in Washington, primarily that of Ambassador (2000-2005), after which Kergin entered into semi-retirement with corporate law firm Bennett-Jones, as noted above.

Bennett-Jones claims to be "a leading business law firm founded and focused on principles of professional excellence, integrity, respect, and independent thought."[629] Those lofty claims, however, stand in stark contradiction to their actions and the clients they represent. In 2012, their website boasted of their work on behalf of much-maligned Canadian mining company Barrick Gold, advocacy for Compass Petroleum Ltd, purchases by Canadian subsidiaries of British Petroleum, and other work with a variety of similar corporations.[630] Bennett-Jones had experience in Honduras directly, in its work on behalf of Canadian investors who were defrauded by the Canadian owners of the Merendon mining project in Honduras.[631] It is clear that Michael Kergin had a great deal of expertise with respect to international trade and corporate law. It is unclear how that should qualify him to sit on a human rights commission following a coup whose leaders were cosy with the firms that Kergin represents in his day job.

In the context of Canada's broader interests in Honduras – to which I will return in Chapter 7 – Kergin appeared to be a perfect fit for the role; his diplomatic postings in other Latin American countries provided some legitimacy for his inclusion in the panel while his strong connection to the Canadian corporate sector ensured that he would not be easily convinced to push hard against the new regime. In addition to Kergin, the

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[628] Engler, 19-21.
[629] "Bennett-Jones Welcomes Michael Kergin As Senior Advisor," *Canada Newswire*, Jan 5, 2009.
[630] Bennett-Jones, LLP, "Our Work," available at http://www.bennettjones.com/Ourwork/ .
[631] Jennifer Wells, "Ponzi Canadian Style," *Toronto Star*, September 20, 2009.

commission was headed by former Guatemalan vice-president Eduardo Stein, and the other commissioners were former Peruvian justice minister María Amadilia, and Julieta Castellanos and Jorge Omar Casco, president and former-president of the National Autonomous University of Honduras (UNAH) respectively, both of whom supported the coup.[632] This was, in effect, a coalition composed of Pepe Lobo's arms-length allies, proposing to investigate claims of human rights violations while they continued to take place. As Annie Bird succinctly put it, "while the US and Canadian governments... assist the Honduran government in creating the illusion of 'reconciliation,' death squads assassinate journalists, teachers and unionists."[633]

Indeed, it is worth underlining the fact that Canada's participation in the Commission flew in the face of a number of international organizations that vehemently rejected the legitimacy of the project. The Centre for Justice and International Law (CEJIL), drawing on reports from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (a sub-committee of the OAS), detailed the circumstances that made the Honduran Truth Commission irredeemably flawed and concluded:

> The inauguration of a truth commission with such significant flaws should not be cause for celebration. Nor should it smooth the road to the unconditional reintegration of Honduras into the international community. The legal and economic limitations with which the Commission begins its work undermine its operation and the results it may obtain. Far from providing support for a serious process of reconciliation, they may generate new sources of indignation.[634]

Among other things, CEJIL noted that the Commissioners were handpicked supporters of the regime, that the Commission was not empowered to investigate human rights abuses,

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[632] Thelma Mejía, "Honduras: Disputed Truth Commission to Investigate Coup" *IPS*, May 5, 2010.
[633] Annie Bird, "Disappearing Truth in Honduras: Commissions Cover Up Demands for New Constitution," *Upside Down World*, April 13, 2010.
[634] CEJIL, "Reflections on the Opening of the Honduran Truth Commission."

that the perpetrators of the coup had already been granted legal amnesty for their actions, and that Pepe Lobo had specifically expressed that the Commission was "not for judging anybody, but rather for finding reconciliation for the Honduran people,"[635] to which the CEJIL report responded by insisting that "avoiding the assessing of responsibility is a guarantee that impunity will be perpetuated."[636]

The Commission released its findings just over a year later, on July 7, 2011, timed to coincide with the signing of the Cartagena Accord and the reintegration of Honduras into the OAS. Predictably, the Commission offered little more than bland recommendations for minor reform to Honduran governance structures, expending much energy on detailed speculation around the possibility of corruption in the Zelaya government, but refusing to place any direct responsibility for the violence and repression of the coup and its fallout on any of the individuals involved in actually perpetrating it. While the Commission acknowledges that what happened on June 28, 2009 was, indeed, a coup d'etat, it worked hard to locate the coup in a context of constitutional violations by the Zelaya government.

Canada's representative, the above-mentioned Michael Kergin, reflected on his experiences on the Commission in September 2012, and his short article is an excellent articulation of the Commission's position and, especially, Canada's angle within it. As background to the coup, Kergin's piece details, rather extensively, speculation that Zelaya's government was implicated in corruption. After exhausting every possible accusation of corruption and illegality, Kergin briefly acknowledges that it is all speculation and none of it could be proven, before reaching the conclusion that all of the

[635] Porfirio "Pepe" Lobo, quoted in Radio América, "Presidente Lobo instala Comisión de la Verdad," May 5, 2010.
[636] CEJIL, "Reflections..."

primary figures in the coup d'etat were implicated in actions that broke with the 1982 Constitution.[637] Cleverly, then, Kergin leaves the impression that, while no one quite followed the letter of the law, the crisis was fomented by Zelaya, who had increasingly become a puppet of Hugo Chávez, and who, in pursuing the Constituent Assembly in the first place, had "borrowed a leaf from the Chávez playbook." Indeed, the mild critique of the *golpistas* comes at the tail end of many pages of speculative denouncements of Zelaya's behaviour, ranging from "rampant rumours" of Venezuelan development money "funnelled" to labour and peasant organizations and "slush funds," to the "abrupt" raising of the minimum wage without Congressional approval, to "peaked anxiety over President Zelaya's closeness to Chavez." Meanwhile, Kergin consistently presents the Honduran armed forces, Congress, and Supreme Court as acting with restraint in the face of irrational and dangerous provocations by Zelaya.[638]

Kergin reiterates Canada's early claims that the November 2009 elections were free and fair, and that the Lobo government is therefore legitimate. Meanwhile, he expends just one paragraph describing the "clumsy" reaction of the armed forces to the rising of Zelaya's "partisans," noting that a dozen people were killed by "disproportionate use of force," and that eight other people appeared to have been assassinated. Following Peter Kent's portrayal of Zelaya's attempts to re-enter Honduras in 2009 as "reckless," Kergin describes Zelaya's efforts as "melodramatic" and implicitly connects the increased repression in that period to Zelaya's behaviour. In describing the process of the Commission itself, Kergin acknowledges that Zelaya and the Resistance – again labelled

[637] Michael Kergin, "The Honduran Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2010-2011)," *Optimum Online*, Vol. 42, No. 3, September 2012, p. 42-45.
[638] Kergin, "Honduran Truth Commission..."

"Zelaya's partisans" – refused to participate and created a rival Truth Commission which, despite the efforts of the official commission, would not cooperate with his.[639]

Kergin rather ironically relates the Commissions' finding that the Honduran constitution needs reform, offers a number of other banal observations about the need for more transparent governance and rule of law, and presents rather toothless recommendations for reparations for "verifiable" cases of human rights abuses. Of particular interest is the following paragraph, which I quote in full:

> The [Commission] concluded that [human rights] violations were broadly prevalent during the five months of the *de facto* Micheletti government. There are indeed factors which might explain, but do not excuse, the excessive use of force during this period: a traditional culture of violence in Honduras, decentralized control over a widely and thinly dispersed police force; and a lack of professional training at the operational level. The small country was also suffering collective paranoia out of its isolation from the international community, exacerbated by its former president testing its borders with support from South American heavy hitters such as Brazil, Venezuela and Argentina.[640]

Several of these statements require brief unpacking. First, it needs be noted that by articulating in such detail the "explanations" for the "excessive" use of force, Kergin implicitly does justify those actions, even if he half-heartedly protests that they cannot be justified. Second, it is interesting that, despite acknowledging that it was a coup d'etat, Kergin describes Honduras' "former president testing its borders," conveniently forgetting that Zelaya was still legally the president when he "tested" those borders.[641] Finally, it is rather noteworthy that Kergin feels entitled to partially explain the post-coup

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[639] Kergin, "Honduran Truth Commission..."
[640] Kergin, "Honduran Truth Commission..." p. 55.
[641] Kergin is referencing Zelaya's two attempts – the first unsuccessful – to re-enter Honduras after being kidnapped and exiled. Even the framing of these attempts at "testing the borders" serves to suggest that Zelaya was engaged in some sort of provocation.

violence on a "traditional culture of violence in Honduras," a statement that smacks of a kind of colonial victim-blaming; since Hondurans are "traditionally" violent, according to Kergin, we shouldn't be too critical of one group of Hondurans for being violent to another.[642] Instead, presumably, the colonial power should intervene to make them less violent, even though that very colonial power is, inevitably, inflicting violence of one sort or another upon its subjects.[643] This, of course, is where Kergin's claim ultimately leads: his critique of a decentralized and unprofessional police force opens itself perfectly to the colonial suggestion that Canada should train the Honduran armed forces to be more professional. This is, in fact, what has happened. (I will return to Canada's participation in training and police reform in the following chapter).

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[642] Adrienne Pine does well to interrogate the notion of a violent Honduran subjectivity in *Working Hard, Drinking Hard.*

[643] It is well outside the scope of this project to dig into the myriad cultural manifestations of colonialism, but it is worth briefly highlighting this point. Of course, there *is* a culture of violence in Honduras, which this dissertation has described in some detail. But, as Chapters 3 and 4 endeavoured to demonstrate, that culture cannot be separated from the successive waves of violent colonial interventions, subjugations and impositions. Describing a "culture of violence" as a product of centuries of colonialism is very different from suggesting that there is something *inherently* violent in a given community, the latter of which has been a central component of colonialism for hundreds of years. The so-called "*mission civilisatrice*" upon which the colonizers embarked, supposedly to bring the "darker" nations in the "light," to bring them out of "primitive savagery" into "rational enlightenment," is obviously reliant on the assumption that, indeed, the people who were the subjects of colonial interventions were inherently backward. The material purposes of the colonial project – thievery, expansion, exploitation – are subsumed into the cultural justifications that give it true form. The victims of colonialism are blamed for it; "it may be painful but it is for their own good," say the colonizers. "They must be broken from their backwards, violent, ignorant, savage ways." The colonizers insist that they aren't stealing land and riches and labour, they are simply spreading the best of civilization to those who need a helping hand. The violent destruction of entire cultural forms, the disrupting of human societal bonds, and the forced re-education into the culture of the colonizer, are common manifestations of this discourse, and can be seen in colonial projects ranging from the Canadian "residential schools" designed to "beat out the Indian" from surviving Indigenous people in Canada to the banning of local customs, ceremonies, family and community structures and even languages, in the European conquests of Latin America and Africa. Naturally, this discourse, and the practices that flow from it, take a variety of different forms in different times and places, but they are a consistent and insidious element of the colonial project and one can see the discourse at work very clearly in Michael Kergin's discussion of Honduras' "traditional culture of violence." This analysis is drawn from the scholarship typically associated with postcolonialism, of which much of it accepts the basic arguments I have replicated. A few different articulations of these arguments can be found in: Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* Grove Press, New York, 2004. Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1991. Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, Vintage Press, New York, 1993.

Kergin's colonial arrogance stretched as far as to claim – in spite of a nationwide social movement that was demanding a re-opening of the Honduran Constitution to popular amendment – that Hondurans did not like Zelaya's version of participatory democracy, preferring instead "the Honduran norm" of representative democracy and the two-party system.[644] Kergin seems to imply that Hondurans just don't *want* to have too much say in how their lives are governed and would prefer for someone to tell them what to do.[645] In light of Kergin's reflections, then, it is hardly surprising that Canada gushed with enthusiasm at the Commission's findings and its tepid criticism of the regime; newly appointed Minister of State for the Americas Diane Ablonczy expressed hope "that Hondurans will never again experience such an ordeal," ignoring the rather obvious fact that the ordeal was ongoing.[646] Further emphasizing Canada's complicity in the project to whitewash the Honduran coup is the fact that 10% of the Commission's report was placed in a Canadian library, to be kept classified for 10 years.[647]

THE CARTAGENA ACCORDS

[644] Kergin, "Honduran Truth Commission," p. 54.

[645] Again, this echoes the colonial justifications described above, though it represents a slightly different version; in this case, the colonizer relies on the discourse of its subjects' "backwardness" to justify supporting anti-democratic or otherwise reactionary local leadership. The notion is that the colonized subjects are not yet "ready" for democracy, wealth, autonomy or whatever else popular social movements might be demanding. Think of the responses colonial powers always give to assertions of anti-colonial struggle; the French couldn't possibly leave Algeria, what would become of the Algerians? Or the Israeli answers to Palestinian liberation struggles, which have consistently claimed that Palestinians were not capable of responsibly governing their own state. The same discourse justifies Canada's ongoing colonization of Indigenous people, whose demands for self-government are always countered by claims that they would govern themselves irresponsibly and, as such, still need the Canadian state to take care of them. Indeed, Canada extends the same logic to Afghanistan, which it has occupied for over a decade, ostensibly because it would fall into chaos and violence if Canadian troops weren't there to take care of things. Memmi is particularly poignant on this: "whenever the colonizer adds, in order not to fall prey to anxiety, that the colonized is a wicked, backwards person with evil, thievish, somewhat sadistic instincts, he thus justifies his police and his legitimate severity. After all, he must defend himself against the dangerous, foolish acts of the irresponsible and, at the same time – what meritorious concern! – protect him against himself!" Memmi, 82.

[646] D-FAIT, "Canada Pleased With Release of Honduran Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report," July 7, 2011.

[647] Todd Gordon and Jeffery R. Webber, "The Cartagena Accord: A Step Forward for Canada in Honduras," *The Bullet*, No. 526, July 13, 2011.

Coinciding with the release of the Truth Commission findings, and against the backdrop of the steady, continuing cycle of resistance and repression, on May 22, 2011, Pepe Lobo's government signed the Cartagena Accord, along with representatives of Colombia and Venezuela, which dramatically altered the terrain upon which the relentless state violence was taking place. The Accord negotiated the return of former-President Manuel Zelaya and other political exiles to Honduras with a promise to have charges against them annulled, and it included other guarantees with regard to upholding rule of law, ensuring protection of human rights, and carrying out public referenda on matters of significance. It also specifically asserted the legal right of the FNRP and associated organizations to form a political party to contest the 2013 elections.[648]

Much of the Accord smacks of a kind of absurdity. The passage that guarantees that the government should keep tabs on the protection of human rights, "in a special way," seems rather comical in a context where, surely, protection of human rights ought to be taken for granted. Its assertion of the responsibility of the government to allow public referenda is another ironic piece, given that Zelaya was ostensibly overthrown because he was pursuing just such a referendum. As Dana Frank wryly noted, only the repatriation of Zelaya was not already a legal responsibility of the government of Honduras, though perhaps Lobo's regime does not consider itself beholden to those laws since it did not take power legally.[649] Jari Dixon, a member of the public ministry fired by the coup regime when he began attending FNRP rallies in his time off, explained in

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[648] The full text of Cartagena can be accessed through the website of *La Tribuna*. "Acuerdo para la Reconciliación Nacional y la Consolidación del Sistema Democrático en la República de Honduras," *La Tribuna*, May 22, 2011. Available at: http://www.latribuna.hn/2011/05/22/acuerdo-para-la-reconciliacion-nacional-y-la-consolidacion-del-sistema-democratico-en-la-republica-de-honduras/

[649] Dana Frank, "Ousted President's Return to Honduras Doesn't Mean Repression Is Over," *The Progressive*, May 27, 2011.

2009 that the coup itself broke the constitution and, as a result, nothing from that moment can be considered properly legal or illegal, as "the entire system of the rule of law became a falsehood."[650] It is worth adding, as well, that the so-called "Compliance Commission," headed by the foreign ministers of Venezuela and Colombia to ensure that all parties adhere to the Accord, was designed to have no more than rhetorical power.

Nevertheless, the Accord led to Zelaya's return on May 28, 2011. His return, which came at a moment of particular difficulty and discouragement for the FNRP, produced an immediate surge of hope and excitement in Honduras. According to Jesse Freeston, the crowd that gathered to meet Zelaya at the airport was the largest single congregation of Hondurans in one place in the country's history.[651] Nonetheless, Zelaya's re-entry into the dynamics of the Resistance produced mixed reactions: while some applauded the amnesty granted to the exiles and believed that the Accord would open up space for democratic dissent, others viewed the Accord with suspicion and openly wondered whether it would lead to any real changes in the climate of repression in Honduras. Bertha Cáceres, General Coordinator of COPINH, explained:

> Everyone is happy that Zelaya has returned... his right of return should have always been unconditional. He's a human being and he has a right to return to his country. However, we believe the Cartagena Accord is in accordance with U.S. strategy... the Resistance is not reducible to Mel Zelaya.[652]

Indeed, one of the primary consequences of the Accord – and this was no doubt understood by all of the parties involved in creating it – was to thrust Manuel Zelaya back into the centre of the storm. His re-introduction to the Resistance not only changed the

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[650] Interview with Jari Dixon, November 26, 2009.
[651] Some claim the number to be as high as one million people, which would represent some 12% of the entire Honduran population. See Jesse Freeston, "Massive Turnout for Zelaya Launches New Chapter of Honduran Struggle," *The Real News*, June 23, 2011.
[652] Bertha Cáceres, quoted in Gordon and Webber, "From Cartagena to Tegucigalpa..."

dynamics within it, about which I will say more shortly; it also changed the way it was perceived outside of Honduras. If the Resistance amounts to Zelaya himself, then the return of Zelaya effectively ends the crisis and Honduras goes back to normal.

On the strength of this claim about Zelaya's return and the successful spinning of the Truth Commission, Honduras was granted re-entry into the OAS. In a context where gross human rights violations were continuing to take place, the Accord simply provided another piece of the flimsy democratic veneer for the coup regime, effectively endorsed by the perceived-victim of the coup, Manuel Zelaya. Naturally, this led many in the Resistance to question the logic of Zelaya's decision. Before the coup, President Zelaya was often the target of political actions, strikes and demonstrations, and he was considered not so different from the oligarchs who had ruled the country for decades. Indeed, even the *golpistas* themselves recognized that Zelaya was once one of their own; as Adolfo Facussé put it, "Mel Zelaya is one of us and – well – it just got out of his control. But the people think that he is an instrument of Chávez and that the fight is with Chávez."[653] The bargain Zelaya struck with the coup regime in May 2011 secured his own re-entry to Honduras and, given the status he gained as President-in-exile, he carried much sway in the Resistance; after all, its current form had coalesced around the demand to have him reinstated. Upon his return to Honduras, he quickly – and somewhat controversially – mobilized the FNRP around the creation of a new political party which would contest the 2013 elections.

This does not sit well with many of the committed activists for whom resisting the coup was simply one part of a larger struggle for social justice in Honduras, for the

[653] Morgan Lee and Alexandra Olson, "Honduran Coup Shows Business Elite Still In Charge," *Associated Press*, August 5, 2009.

creation of an *Espacio Refundacional*, or a refoundation of the country. One such *Espacio* activist is Carlos Amador, the son of Honduran writer Ramón Amaya Amador, whose *Prision Verde* is one of Honduras' most important and enduring pieces of literature. According to Carlos Amador, the move towards electoral politics – ushered along by the repatriation of Zelaya – served only the interests of the regime, who sought to water down the Resistance:

> The Cartagena Accord opened up possibilities for resolving a critical 'problem' of the Resistance that the Obama administration had been seeking to solve since the initial coup – how to channel the popular mobilization into an electoral path, how to defeat the Resistance in the streets, and how to stamp out the construction of popular power and direct democracy outside of parliamentary institutions.[654]

Even organizations that try to tow a careful line between the divisions in the Resistance have acknowledged that the Cartagena Accord threatens to undermine, rather than strengthen, the capacity and security of the movement. COFADEH initially offered a cautious response to the Accord, asserting its trust that former-President Zelaya signed the agreement in good faith, but insisting that the coup regime could not be trusted to carry out even the minimal steps it pledged in the Accord. In their communiqué, COFADEH noted that the text used in the document reflected "doubts, ironies, intentions and evasions" on the part of the regime.[655] They also likened the discourse of the Accord to that used by Presidents Callejas, Maduro, and Flores in the 1990s – some of whom helped edit the text of the Cartagena Accord – in attempting to bury the memory of, and escape responsibility for, the violence and state terror of the 1980s. Indeed, the text itself is evidence enough of the Accord's superficiality:

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[654] Carlos Amador, quoted in Gordon and Webber, "From Cartagena to Tegucigalpa..."
[655] COFADEH, "Human Rights are not subject to political negotiation," May 24, 2011.

> While admitting that during the political crisis there have been people who consider that their human rights were violated, the Government of Honduras, through the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, commits to attend these denunciations in order to contribute to the reconciliation of Honduran society within a framework of verifiable guarantees (...) and awaits support from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.[656]

It should be apparent that the language used – "there have been people who consider that their human rights were violated" – is both a slap in the face to the many victims of the regime and an almost unbelievable denial of responsibility for those crimes. It is, moreover, eerily similar to the language that Canadian officials have used.

A month after COFADEH's statement on the Accord, director Bertha Oliva spoke with Todd Gordon and Jeffrey Webber and added to her earlier doubts:

> Those of us who are here on the ground, who understand the reality of the human rights situation, think the Accord is a trap. We know that before the Cartagena Accord, during the Cartagena Accord negotiations, and during the reintegration of Honduras into the OAS violations of human rights continued... the OAS is not interested in human rights. On the day of the readmission of Honduras into the OAS there were serious violations of human rights occurring.[657]

I have already reproduced a sketch of those violations above, but it is worth adding to that list the less severe but equally troubling cases of some of Zelaya's closest associates. Enrique Flores was President Zelaya's Chief of Staff and was exiled with Zelaya in the Dominican Republic, following the inauguration of Pepe Lobo. Upon the signing of the Cartagena Accord, which guaranteed "the return, safety and freedom of the former officials of the government," Flores boarded the same plane as Manuel Zelaya and returned, together with his former President, to Honduras. On their arrival, Flores was

[656] Fulltext of the Cartagena Accord can be found here: http://www.latribuna.hn/2011/05/22/acuerdo-para-la-reconciliacion-nacional-y-la-consolidacion-del-sistema-democratico-en-la-republica-de-honduras/
[657] Bertha Oliva, quoted in Gordon and Webber, "From Cartagena to Tegucigalpa"

put under house arrest and charged under trumped-up accusations of corruption. As Gordon and Webber astutely observed, "that the Honduran state would detain such a high-profile figure is a warning that no one who crosses the dictatorship will be protected from its punitive actions." They added that the arrest of Flores "reveals the utter confidence with which the state is willing to carry out its agenda even with the ink of Cartagena barely dry."[658]

There are plenty of reasons, then, to be suspicious of the motivations behind the Cartagena Accord and Canada's support for it. Having said that, it is clear that the majority of Hondurans support the new party, the *Partido de Libertad y Refundacíon* (LIBRE), and it gave an embattled movement a shot in the arm at a time that it desperately needed one. The crowd that gathered to greet Zelaya at the airport marked the largest single gathering of Hondurans in one place in the country's history, and organizers in the FNRP had to take seriously the fact that – while he did not emerge from the social movement itself – the coup had made him, by far, its most popular figure and, indeed, the most popular figure in the country. The movement had been fully mobilized for eighteen months and its organizers and supporters were exhausted and demoralized; if Zelaya could rejuvenate the movement, it would make a world of difference.

THE MOVEMENT AND THE PARTY

The severity of the crisis in Honduras and the total collapse of legitimate civilian government begs the question, posed by people in the *Espacio Refundacional*, how can engaging in an electoral process possibly lead to a change of the system itself? It is the central question that has been debated in the movement since the signing of the Cartagena

[658] Gordon and Webber, "From Cartagena to Tegucigalpa"

Accords.[659] Over the course of 2012, predictably, the context for the debate became ever more complicated. Manuel Zelaya's wife, Xiomara Castro de Zelaya, was quickly named LIBRE's Presidential candidate, but there soon emerged five separate currents within the party, one of which was subsequently disbanded. I spoke with leaders and activists in most of the five currents. Four of the five come out of the traditional Liberal Party apparatus and draw not-unfounded criticism and scepticism from the social movement side of the FNRP. These currents almost certainly represent the best hope for the *golpistas* and their imperial allies of co-opting the movement into more easily manipulated reformist politics, a point that was particularly evident to me as I met the leaders of these currents in mid 2012.

One of these currents is the *Movimiento Resistencia Progresista* (MRP), led by a successful and wealthy public notary, Rassel Tomé. Tomé asserted that MRP was the backbone of the movement and bragged about the tortures and indignities he faced for having supported Zelaya during the coup. It is worth noting, however, that his political experience is based primarily in the Liberal Party and that the "tortures" he experienced while barricaded in the Brazilian Embassy with Zelaya were – by his own admission – limited to sound cannons and bright lights that made it difficult to sleep.[660] Not pleasant, to be sure. But it speaks volumes about his relationship to the social movement and, indeed, to the Resistance at large, that he should decry these discomforts without mentioning the extreme levels of violence meted out to less privileged movement activists. Indeed, his distance from the movement is reflected in the ideology he proudly espoused; "other countries have globalization," he explained, "and we want to participate

[659] I discuss the complicated politics of this moment in greater detail elsewhere. Please see Tyler Shipley, "Left International Solidarity in Post-Coup Honduras," *Upside Down World*, September 26, 2012.
[660] Interview with Rassel Tomé, May 9, 2012.

in globalization... we are not into extreme positions like socialism, which failed, or capitalism, which also failed."[661] Leaving aside the obvious question of what social formation he thinks Hondurans want – if neither socialism nor capitalism – and by what means they would bring about this revolution, what is truly significant is that Tomé suggests that Hondurans *want* globalization. While blaming "globalization" for the struggles that Hondurans have faced would be oversimplistic, it should be quite clear from the descriptions of the social movement that I offered (see Chapter 5) that it has historically positioned itself *against* those manifestations of imperialism and neoliberalism that are most often identified with "globalization." It is rather apparent, then, that Rassel Tomé and the MRP offer little representation of the will of the movement.[662]

The other three Liberal Party-based currents offer much the same as MRP. The fifth current, however, represents something quite different. This fifth group is called the *Fuerza de Refundacion Popular* (FRP), and it represents those elements most closely connected to the social movements *within* the political party. The FRP's presence in the LIBRE party is what most distinguishes LIBRE from the traditional Liberal party and the question that is perhaps most important here is whether FRP and other candidates drawn from the social movement will be able to influence significantly the direction that the new party takes, which were put to the test in November 2012 when the party held its internal primaries. Its members are typically longstanding activists within the movement,

[661] Interview with Rassel Tomé, May 9, 2012.
[662] Indeed, in my experience, movement activists had little regard for Tomé, considering him a political opportunist who had conveniently jumped into LIBRE as a gamble that it will be a better bet for his own personal ambitions. The day that I spoke with Tomé, I fell rather ill and had to postpone a few other interviews; it quickly became a popular joke within movement circles that speaking to Rassel Tomé had, quite literally, made me sick.

who are convinced that the electoral process is the only option for the movement at this point. Juan Barahona has been one of the most recognizable faces in the movement for two decades, beginning as a leader of the *Bloque Popular*, and he is also one of the most prominent figures in the FRP. As he explained to me, "in the 1980s, the Left could take power by force. But today, we take power through popular democracy."[663] He and other members of the FRP are committed to projects for radical change. When I asked if a LIBRE victory would usher in a period of social democracy, Barahona replied by pounding his desk, "no more social democracy, no! We want socialism!" He went on to add that he understood why people were wary of the electoral process and the LIBRE party, but that it would do no good "to sit with our arms crossed, refusing to participate" when the party had gained so much momentum and looked to be the primary alternative to the oligarchy in this moment.[664] Another prominent member of FRP, Gilberto Rios, acknowledged that LIBRE was not a revolutionary party, but insisted that it was democratic and progressive, and that this made it a critically important space for the Left to find some space to build upon the more radical politics that emanated from the social movement.[665]

Hope, then, lies in the prospect of LIBRE nominating candidates drawn largely from the FRP and the social movement, who would stand a very good chance of winning in the national elections in 2013, assuming for the moment that a legitimate election process went forward. That assumption, of course, is rather tenuous. At the time of writing, there has already been significant repression targeting LIBRE candidates. I was in Tegucigalpa in May 2012 when journalist and LGBT activist Erick Martinez was

[663] Interview with Juan Barahona, May 10, 2012.
[664] Interview with Juan Barahona, May 10, 2012.
[665] Interview with Gilberto Rios, May 8, 2012.

disappeared and assassinated, not long after being named as a potential LIBRE *diputado* candidate. He was one of many popular figures in LIBRE, and especially in the FRP, who have been threatened and harassed. As the November 2013 elections draw nearer, it will likely become increasingly clear that Honduras remains under a coercive military dictatorship that will not cede power to any party that appears to genuinely represent the will of Honduran social movements. Canada's behaviour around those elections will, no doubt, be instructive.

THE FNRP PERSISTS

It is worth concluding this chapter by acknowledging that, although the Honduran state has clamped down hard on journalists and controls most of the large-scale media outlets, the strength and commitment of the FNRP is such that the crimes of the coup regime are still regularly and thoroughly documented and reported. Human rights organizations like COFADEH and FIAN continue to risk their own members' lives in keeping track of the relentless attacks, and in conducting proper investigations into major crimes like murder, work that the police often refuse to do. The state claims most political assassinations to be the result of routine gang violence; for instance, on May 3, 2010, Lobo's Minister of Security Oscar Alvarez told *La Tribuna*:

> I guarantee that in all of the cases [of the journalists' murders], there is no connection to indicate that it is due to their work as journalists. That is to say that there is no person or people trying to silence journalists; it is simply that, just as other people, after their work as reporters, journalists spend their time on their own personal situations.[666]

That position was echoed by Lobo's Vice-President María Antonieta de Bográn, reinforcing the fact that it is up to human rights organizations, community groups, and

[666] Oscar Alvarez, quoted in Cuffe, "The Snakes Sleep..."

independent journalists to determine which attacks really are related to gang and *narco* conflicts, which one are politically motivated, and which are a combination of both.[667]

Indeed, the latter point is key, since that work is so complicated by the fact that the regime regularly uses its discreet connections to the gangs to distance itself from political attacks. Though the rank-and-file of Honduran gangs tend to be young working-class men and boys, many gangs are connected to – and populated by – former police and paramilitaries who in many cases still maintain close ties to the official organs of the state. In fact, members of the Resistance have regularly asserted that coup-plotter General Romeo Vásquez Velásquez – general of the armed forces during and after the coup and appointed head of HONDUTEL under Pepe Lobo's government – had links to the '*Mara Salvatrucha*' (MS-13) gang.[668] In addition, the large network of "legal vigilantes" described in Chapter 4, who operated as extra-judicial executioners in the 1990s and early 2000s, continue to occupy a space somewhere between police and death squads. In 2007, a former security minister acknowledged that some 30-50% of Honduran police were involved in organized crime and *narco* gangs,[669] and by 2012 police corruption was so rampant that the state was forced to make much ado about a police reform commission to be headed by widely respected Honduran historian, Victor Meza, who nevertheless expressed grave doubts about the prospects for reforming an

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[667] Adrienne Pine's above-mentioned *Working Hard, Drinking Hard* provides an excellent overview of the complicated terrain of gang violence in Honduras, prior to the 2009 coup. Even before the coup, Pine notes that Honduran police exaggerated the extent and severity of gang violence in order to bolster their own power and that the problem of gang violence in Honduras is both a product of poverty and isolation in poor communities and, at the same time, is used to justify violent policies and practices towards Honduras' poor.

[668] Vásquez Velásquez was arrested in 1993 for participation in a series of auto thefts connected to *narco* gangs and supposedly called himself part of a 'gang of 13.' It isn't entirely clear that this was a reference to MS-13, but Vásquez Velásquez has undoubtedly been implicated in gang and *narco* activity for decades. Bertha Cáceres notes in 2009: "He's a car thief from the "13's" gang. This country has become a narco-politics country." Al Giordano, "Honduras Coup General Was Charged in 1993 Auto Theft Ring," *The Narco News*, July 4, 2009.

[669] Ismael Moreno, "Insecurity, Criminality, Hidden Powers and Visible Roots," *Envío* 312, July 2007.

institution that was "infiltrated at every level by criminal organizations."[670] These networks and connections, built up between the official and unofficial wings of the repressive apparatus, make it easy to understand how state violence could be plausibly dressed up to look like gang violence, if its targets weren't so obviously and consistently opponents of the coup regime.[671]

Nonetheless, the work of documenting the violence continues to be done; alongside grassroots human rights and community organizing is a network of courageous Honduran journalists, supported by a variety of international independent news media in getting their message to a wider audience, who have made it all but impossible for anyone to claim ignorance of the ongoing repression in Honduras under the Lobo regime. The availability of this documentation – in Spanish and English, from sources Honduran and international, from local organizations like FIAN to international NGOs like Amnesty International – casts a particular pall over Canada's decision to put its full diplomatic, political, and economic weight behind the coup regime.

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[670] Interview with Victor Meza, May 10, 2012. Meza, whose scholarly work on the Honduran labour movement is the most thorough and important work of its kind, has been critical of the coup from the beginning. Nevertheless, he seems to exercise a well-developed ambivalence – an adaptation for self-preservation, perhaps, given the danger of expressing critical views in Honduras – whereby he both acknowledges the deep, structurally-rooted nature of the problems in Honduras while, simultaneously, expressing a curious and contradictory optimism with respect to the prospect of resolving Honduras' problems through semi-official organs like the police reform commission he is heading. When I suggested to him that, if the police and the state are as corrupt as he thinks they are, won't they surely respond with violence to any attempt to meaningfully reform it, his response was, "yes, I recognize the danger and difficulty. In fact, a journalist was kidnapped 20 meters from this office yesterday." Yet, in the same breath, he insists that a coalition of civil society groups have come together around the commission and that he believes it can work. I return to the matter of police reform – and Canada's role in that process – in Chapter 7.

[671] All of this is reminiscent of Charles Tilly's 1985 assessment of statecraft as organized crime; Tilly argues that war-making and state-making can be described as "protection rackets" in which "banditry, piracy, gangland rivalry, policing and war-making all belong on the same continuum," and where the same coercive force that creates danger (ie. the state, the police, organized crime) offers itself as the protection from it. In a case like contemporary Honduras, Tilly's comparison of the state to a crime syndicate actually comes real; no longer simply an analogy, the state is more or less a criminal organization and the criminal gangs are more or less the state. See Charles Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime," in Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer and Theda Skocpol, ed., *Bringing the State Back In*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1985, p. 169-192.

In June 2009, Canada was slow and soft in condemning the first military coup in Honduras since the 1970s. In November 2009, it was only by intentionally ignoring a well-organized campaign by human rights organizations – and working very hard to do so – that Canada could claim Honduras had seen free and fair elections. In 2010, it was only by pretending not to notice the daily reports of ongoing state violence that Canada could contribute to a so-called Truth Commission that would inevitably produce only the truths its sponsors wanted to spin. In 2011 and 2012, the news from Honduras continued to be grim, and continued to be widely accessible to anyone with an internet connection and fifteen minutes; even mainstream liberal organizations like Amnesty International published hundreds of pages of reports detailing the human rights catastrophe in Honduras. And yet, Canada spearheaded the campaign to reintegrate Honduras into the OAS, and Stephen Harper was the first head-of-state to visit the country thereafter and actually began directly supporting its police and military infrastructure. Since it is impossible that Canada could have made these decisions without some awareness of the human rights catastrophe in Honduras, we can only assume that Canadian officials know what is happening in Honduras and – in full awareness of the anti-democratic violence taking place – have chosen to support its current course.[672] It is to explaining this apparent contradiction, in light of my arguments about Canada's new role in global politics in Chapter 2, that the next chapter will be devoted.

[672] Especially in light of the dozens of petitions and open letters that have been addressed to the Prime Minister and his cabinet, and the many public demonstrations held in Canadian cities and independent media reports that have been circulated in Canada.

CHAPTER SEVEN – CANADA'S INVESTMENT IN HONDURAS

In the previous chapter, I argued that Canada's behaviour towards Honduras following the 2009 coup d'etat amounted to a systematic program of support for a regime that had taken power by force, against the will of popular opinion and mobilization, and with violent consequences for the majority of Hondurans. Since this flies in the face of Canada's standard presentation of its foreign policy goals, and since the previous chapter demonstrated that Canada's support for the coup regime was calculated, systematic, and long-term, the purpose of this chapter will be to explain this apparent contradiction. As such, this chapter will bring the central argument of this dissertation full circle, hearkening back to the analysis offered in Chapter 2 of the new Canadian imperialism. Indeed, what is most telling about Canada's relationship to Honduras is the extent to which Canadian capital has taken advantage of Honduras' circumstances to extract profits from its people and resources, and the extent to which the Canadian state has worked to secure those circumstances.

Canada has emerged as Honduras' second largest investor,[673] with over $600 million in foreign direct investment (FDI),[674] and the social movements – whose growing power was represented by the possible re-opening of the constitution in 2009 – were increasingly posing a threat to the flow of profits. Significantly, since the 2009 coup, the forces that were threatening Canadian profits have been hammered down, and the conditions for long-term profitable Canadian investment in Honduras have been substantially improved. This chapter will be devoted to documenting Canada's direct investments in Honduras – with particular attention to the mining, garment, and tourist

[673] Gordon, *Imperialist Canada*, p. 177.
[674] Todd Gordon, "Canada Backs Profits, Not Human Rights, in Honduras," *Toronto Star*, August 16, 2011.

industries – and, perhaps more importantly, Canada's broader project for the construction of a Honduras that will be "right" for Canadian capital across a variety of industries.[675]

CANADA'S DIRECT INVESTMENTS – MINING

There is perhaps no better place to start than the mines, where the intersection of Canadian capital and Honduran workers forms part of broader legacies for both parties. Canada's ill-reputed mining companies have left a well-documented trail of crimes against the communities they affect – crimes against human security and health, against the environment upon which those societies are built, and against those communities' very social fabric itself – that stretches from the diamond mines of Canada's north to the gold mines of Central America to the copper and cobalt mines of the Congo.[676] For Hondurans, the experience of struggling against rapacious mining companies, of course, stretches at least as far back as the Spanish conquest, during which time thousands of Indigenous people were enslaved and forced to work in mines around Tegucigalpa, San Juancito, and elsewhere, as documented in Chapter 3.

The encounter between Canadian mining companies and Hondurans has followed predictable patterns. The first thrust came in the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch, as Canada extended to Honduras an aid and reconstruction package worth $100 million over four years, provided that Canadian companies be permitted to move in and assess

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[675] This is a reference to the now infamous words of Smedley Butler, speaking as a former member of the U.S. marines, describing himself as having been a "racketeer" for American business. "I helped in the raping of half a dozen Central American republics for the benefit of Wall Street. I helped purify Nicaragua for the International Banking House of Brown Brothers in 1902-1912. I brought light to the Dominican Republic for the American sugar interests in 1916. I helped make Honduras right for the American fruit companies in 1903." Smedley Butler, quoted in Jules Archer, *The Plot to Seize the White House*, New York, Hawthorne Books, 1973.

[676] A reliable and consistent source for information on Canadian mining operations is the organization Mining Watch Canada, which publishes seasonal newsletters and, periodically, larger investigative reports. Please see: http://www.miningwatch.ca/home

Honduras' investment potential.[677] As Honduran social institutions were being disarticulated by the wrenching introduction of neoliberalism, Canadian mining firms quickly determined that they could establish a profitable presence, and established a national association, the *Asociación Nacional de Mineros* (ANAMINH), to negotiate a new mining code with the Honduran government. The 1998 mining code that came out of those negotiations embodied the very laws that the *Coordinadora Nacional de Resistencia Popular* (CNRP) and the social movement struggled against throughout the 2000s and included provisions for lifelong concessions to foreign companies, minimal taxation, and subsurface land rights for "rational resource exploitation."[678]

Indeed, that mining code was challenged by community movement activists, largely from the Valle de Siria, as unconstitutional and, remarkably, the challenge was upheld by the Honduran Supreme Court in 2005. Karen Spring and Sandra Cuffe describe this important development:

> On October 4, 2005, the Supreme Court ruled that 13 different articles of the General Mining Law contravened the Honduran Constitution and were thus declared null and void. The articles in question dealt with issues including the forced expropriation of lands in the name of public interest, royalties, workers' rights,

[677] Ashley Holly, "Shame on Canada, Coup Supporter," *The Tyee*, July 9, 2009. The influx of foreign capital after Hurricane Mitch follows the patterns described in Naomi Klein's important *The Shock Doctrine*. Klein's argument is that capital seeks and seizes upon natural or social disasters in order to take advantage of the dislocation and weakness of the affected peoples and states, in order to move into otherwise blocked spaces or establish new spaces for profitable investment (by coercing states to sign free trade agreements, re-write legislation around investment, labour or environmental codes, or simply moving in at a moment of need and offering services that local companies can no longer functionally offer, thus displacing them semi-permanently.) Klein makes a convincing case for what she calls "disaster capitalism," and while I think she overemphasizes the need for natural disasters, she does acknowledge that capital also finds ways to construct these "shock" conditions whenever it sees a need. Indeed, her "disaster capitalism" could be better described simply as "capitalism," since the history of capital has been propelled forward by precisely the dynamics she describes; the dramatic and violent uprooting of the peasantry in England, the shock and dislocation of colonial invasions and occupations, or the fomenting of debt crises in the Global South are all examples of unnatural disasters, created in large part *by* capital, that created "shock" conditions upon which capital seized and turned to its advantage. Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, Vintage Books, Toronto, 2007.

[678] Holly, "Shame on Canada."

> and environmental impact assessments. The Supreme Court ruling also set important jurisprudence in the country, recognizing the right to a healthy environment, the precautionary principle, the importance of consultation, and the fact that mining is "highly contaminating and damaging to life."
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> In the wake of the Supreme Court decision, mining concessions in Honduras were suspended and a temporary moratorium on new concessions was enacted. The grassroots movement of resistance to mining held demonstrations and actions throughout the Zelaya Administration both to ensure the ongoing renewal of the moratorium and to demand a new mining law banning open pit metallic mining. Work on draft legislation to that effect, developed by affected communities and NGOs alongside presidential advisors, was cut short by the 2009 coup. A Congressional Committee had also been working on a mining law proposal requiring fifty per cent State involvement in all mining ventures.[679]

Nevertheless, Canada emerged after 1998 to become Honduras' leading foreign investor in mining, taking advantage of the very laws deemed unconstitutional in 2005. Indeed, just a few months before the 2009 coup, Canadian companies were actively and aggressively pressuring the Zelaya government to roll back the ruling. A comprehensive report by the Americas Policy Group (APG) of the Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC) described these companies' behaviour:

> Canadian companies and other multinational corporations took part in joint pressure campaigns, which included tactics such as freezing investments. In the months before the coup, a Canadian mining company was one amongst a consortium of five that reportedly offered to invest $1.75 billion dollars in Honduras should the 2006 executive decree prohibiting new mining concessions be overturned.[680]

Much of my analysis of the Honduran mining sector is developed out of a series of interviews with Pedro Landa, a longtime activist in the alternative development

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[679] Karen Spring and Sandra Cuffe, "Canada and Chile Meddling in Honduras's Economic and Security Policies," *Upside Down World*, May 21, 2012.
[680] Canadian Council for International Cooperation, "Honduras: Democracy Denied," Report from the CCIC's Americas Policy Group with Recommendations to the Government of Canada, April 2010, p. 17.

organization *Centro Hondureño para la Promoción del Desarrollo Alternativo* (CEHPRODEC), who came to Canada in March 2011 to testify before the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade (SCFAIT) in Ottawa, in an attempt to convince Canadian officials that a free-trade agreement with the coup government would only deepen the disastrous consequences of the coup.[681] His testimony then was, obviously, ignored, and he returned to Ottawa in January 2012 to speak against Canada's participation in the re-writing of the Honduran mining code. Before the coup, Zelaya's government had been working with the social movements to develop a mining code that would be more just; a complicated struggle that was, by no means, going exactly the way movement activists might have wanted. Nevertheless, there was dialogue, there was progress, and there was an expectation that further progress could be made with continued pressure from the social movement. At the time of the coup, a draft proposal for a new mining code had been prepared; it would have strengthened environmental and labour regulations and introduced a comprehensive community consultation process.[682]

Ironically, since the coup, the regime has used the lack of an existing mining code to justify writing its own – a radically different version from that being developed by Zelaya's government, which has been heavily influenced by the interests of foreign, especially Canadian and Chilean, mining companies and trade and diplomatic officials. When Pedro Landa came to Canada to speak against the new mining code, he described the many ways it was designed to benefit the companies instead of the communities; it

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[681] Mary Durran, "Honduran Partners Mobilize Against New Mining Law," Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace, January 22, 2012.
[682] Harvey Beltrán, "Coup Leaves Nation Without Mining Law," *Business News Americas*, September 25, 2009.

failed to ban the cyanide-leeching open-pit method, it failed to protect Honduran water systems, it offered further tax breaks to companies, it made concessions easier to grant and harder to repeal, made community consultations a rare exception, and it limited public access to information about mining operations.[683]

In an interview in 2012, Landa gave me an overview of the current scope of mining and energy concessions in Honduras. In Santa Bárbara, 76 mining concessions and 3 mega dam proposals; in Copán, 14 mining concessions; in La Paz, 3 mining concessions and 4 mega dams; in Valle, 12 mining concessions; in Choluteca, 18 mining concessions. Almost all of these concessions fall on or around Indigenous territories and communities.[684] In total, there were 154 concessions that had been granted before the moratorium on new approvals was passed by Presidents Maduro and Zelaya (as explained in Chapter 5) of which nearly 100 have been owned by Canadian companies at one time or another during their operation. In 2011, 200 additional concessions were requested; of those, 150 were requested by Santos Gabino Carvajal – a former manager at the El Mochito mine and the President of ANAMINH – on behalf of the Canadian company Breakwater Resources Ltd. Breakwater, which operated two mines in addition to El Mochito, was subsequently bought out for $663 million by a company called Nyrstar, headquartered in Belgium, which now operates the El Mochito mine.[685]

It is not easy to gain access to reliable information with respect to the specific concessions and operations in Honduras but, using information that CEHPRODEC was able to acquire through the organization that reviews applications for concessions,

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[683] CEHPRODEC and an array of Honduran civil society groups signed onto a letter detailing their critiques of the new mining code and its continued unconstitutionality. I have reproduced that letter as Appendix F.
[684] Interview with Pedro Landa, May 4, 2012.
[685] "Breakwater Resources agrees to $663 million all-cash takeover by Nyrstar," *Proactive Investors USA & Canada*, June 15, 2011.

Dirección Ejecutiva De Fomento a la Mineria (DEFOMIN), I will offer a brief overview of the scope of Canadian mining operations in Honduras before turning, in some detail, to some of the most notable cases. The Maya Gold Company, based in Quebec and mostly focused on mining in Morocco, owns a concession of some 120,000 acres in Honduras, primarily in Choluteca. The two largest sites in its project are located in Casas Viejas and El Triunfo.[686] Also in Choluteca is the gold and silver concession at Camporo (formerly called Cacamuya), owned by First Point Minerals, based in Vancouver; this site was first detailed for mining exploration by the Rosario Mining Company in the late 1930s.[687] First Point also owns a silver, zinc, and copper concession near the village of Los Cedros. Vancouver-based Standard Mining controls eleven exploration projects, including the Zopilote concession, over 304 square miles mostly in Santa Bárbara, in the foothills of the Sierra de Omoa.[688] In the early 1990s, Kennecott Companies and US-based Fisher Watt Gold established a partnership to explore the mountains around the town of Minas de Oro; that company sold the project to Tombstone Exploration Corp, then based in Nanaimo, though now headquartered in the United States, which will now own the mining concession for 40 years.[689]

This partial list gives a sense of the scope of Canadian operations, but it is worth describing a handful of these projects in some detail, starting with the troubling case of

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[686] Interview with Pedro Landa, March 3, 2013.

[687] "Camporo Property," First Point Minerals Corp, March 7, 2013. Available at: http://www.firstpointminerals.com/s/Camporo.asp

[688] Omoa was, rather ironically, the site of a Honduran prison where striking banana workers were sent in the struggles of the early 20th century; the commander of the Omoa fortress famously sided with the workers and set them free in 1916, as discussed in Chapter 3. Victor Meza, *Historia del Movimiento Obrero Hondureño*, Tegucigalpa, Guaymuras, 1980, p. 13.

[689] All of this information, summarized by Pedro Landa in our interview, comes from a series of documents that CEHPRODEC was able to obtain from DEFOMIN which detail each concession (prior to 2009) specifically, by department, including the names and companies represented by the applicants for the concessions. For brevity's sake, I cite here just one of the documents in question. DEFOMIN, "Listado de solicitudes metálicas otorgadas, departamento de Francisco Morazán," Registro público de derechos mineros, April 15, 2010.

the San Andrés mine in the Department of Copán, on a site first explored by the infamous Rosario Mining Company. A subsidiary of the Quebec-based Noranda ran the mine between 1974-76, but dropped the concession on account of what it considered excessive taxation. When the Honduran constitution was re-drafted under the military dictatorship in the early 1980s, the tax codes for mining concessions were changed, and the mine was re-opened. It was bought by Greenstone Resources in 1995, then operated by Yamana Gold, and it now belongs to Aura Minerals. All of these were Canadian firms. Greenstone Resources, for its part, went bankrupt in 2000, after having razed the village of San Andrés amidst promises of rebuilding the community elsewhere. When it went bankrupt, it owed La Union (the municipality where San Andrés is located) some $100,000 and had not fulfilled most of its promises to the communities it had destroyed; over 90% of the people it displaced did not have legal title to the land they were promised by the company.[690]

San Andrés was the first open-pit mine in Honduras, making extensive use of cyanide, a toxic chemical best known in the North for its ubiquitous use in murder mystery novels.[691] It is, then, no mystery that cyanide is a killer; the San Andrés mine uses cyanide to leech some 4 million tons of ore each year.[692] It has also managed to spill tons of the poisonous chemical into the Rio Lara – the primary river in the region's water

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[690] Michael Marsh, "From Québec to Copan: Globalization and the Case of San Andrés Minas," *Mining Watch Canada*, June 25, 2001. Available at: http://www.miningwatch.ca/qu-bec-copan-globalization-and-case-san-andr-s-minas

[691] Agatha Christie's *Sparkling Cyanide*, for instance, involved a murder disguised as suicide in which the killer used a few drops of cyanide in a glass of sparkling wine. These stories are significant only because they illustrate that it is rather common knowledge that even a *drop* of cyanide is lethal, putting into sharp relief these mining companies' use of thousands of tons of cyanide in their operations on or around communities that may or may not have agreed to their presence.

[692] Aura Minerals Inc., "San Andres Technical Report," March 28, 2012, p. 7-15. Available at: http://www.auraminerals.com/files/San%20Andres%20Tech%20Report%2028%20March%202012-FINAL_v002_m3a5qe.pdf

system upon which four major communities are reliant – with predictably murderous results. A variety of health crises ranging from skin disease to respiratory collapse have plagued the communities of San Miguel, Azacualpa, Campo Plantonares, and San Andrés; the latter was forcibly relocated to make way for the mine in the first place. In 2003, the Rio Lara served up 18,000 dead fish, as clear an indication as any that the water supply had become completely toxic; similar incidents in 2006 and 2009 only reinforced communities' awareness that the mine was slowly poisoning their land and bodies.[693]

In addition to the cyanide leaching, the company used explosives to open the mine in the first place which, combined with the deforestation of nearly 5000 trees, led to a crisis of soil erosion and a collapse of the fertility of agricultural land in the region. The lack of fertile soil for cultivation, of course, meant that communities which once survived on small scale agricultural production were no longer able to sustain themselves, and many of the community members have had to take on the dangerous and poorly paid work in the mine itself; the results for the affected communities, then, have amounted to a dramatic collapse in the quality of life.[694] Aura Minerals is actively pursuing four more adjacent sites – for which concessions were applied in 2002[695] – which have not yet been granted, but they will now be considered under the new Honduran mining code; as noted in Chapter 6, Canada actively encouraged and assisted the Lobo regime in pursuing the new mining code, a point to which I will return.

Perhaps the most notorious case of Canadian mining in Honduras is that of the San Martín mine in the Valle de Siria, owned by Vancouver-based Goldcorp. The San

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[693] Xiomara Orellana, "La ruptura de un tubo de la minera Yamana ocasionó la muerte de peces," *La Prensa*, March 20, 2009.
[694] Canadian Mining in Honduras, "Case Study, San Andres, Copan," Available at: http://mininginhonduras.wordpress.com/case-study-san-andres-copan/
[695] Aura Minerals, "San Andres Technical Report," p. 131.

Martín mine was actually shut down in 2008, but its legacy remains profoundly present in Honduras; in fact, the Honduran owners of its local subsidiary are currently facing criminal charges in Honduras for failing to act on knowledge of the dangerously high levels of acidity and heavy metals – lead, arsenic, and mercury – the mining operation deposited in the regional water supply.[696] Juan Almendares, former director of the *Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras* (UNAH) in Tegucigalpa and long time activist in Honduran social movements, led countless medical brigades to the Valle de Siria during and after its eight-year operation, and he reported that when the mine opened in 2000, 8% of people living in the region had suffered skin diseases. By 2010, the rate had increased to 80%.[697]

Indeed, when I interviewed movement activist Carlos Amador in May 2012, he described the Valle de Siria as having been "condemned to death" by Goldcorp's mine:

> We have denounced this company and it should be denounced at the international level; the health problems it has left in Valle de Siria have been documented and they amount to a full medical emergency... we have seen things there that we have never seen before and the situation is going to get much worse before it gets better. The people are very worried, as it just keeps getting worse and worse.[698]

Amador, who had just returned from a medical brigade with Dr. Almendares and has testified at Goldcorp shareholder meetings in Canada, described health disasters that had resulted from lead and arsenic poisoning: skin disease, diseased hair follicles such that

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[696] Rights Action, "Canadian Mining Company Faces Criminal Charges Over Mine Pollution After CAFOD Investigation," *Upside Down World,* August 16, 2010.
[697] Honduras Accompaniment Project (PROAH), "Press Conference about Health Impacts of San Martin Mine and Honduras' Proposed Mining Law," August 28, 2012.
[698] Interview with Carlos Amador, May 8, 2012.

women in their 30s were losing their hair, high levels of lead in people's blood, even a recent case where a woman had lost twin babies as a result of arsenic poisoning.[699]

According to Amador and other community activists, Goldcorp operates with complete impunity in Honduras; the company, however, denies that there are any problems in the Valle de Siria. In fact, they are quick to note that the Honduran state has confirmed that *if* there are any health problems in the region, they are *not* the responsibility of the company, which insists that any problems must pre-date the mine. Indeed, said Amador, "the executive director of Goldcorp was here in Honduras in December, he claimed that he was in the mine, that he bathed, and ate, and that he was fine. I'd like to know what he was eating." In 2007, responding to pressure from the social movements associated with the CNRP, the Honduran public health ministry took a series of blood samples from some 60 people in the Valle de Siria and discovered that their blood was laced with dangerously high levels of arsenic, lead, mercury, cadmium, magnesium, chromium, and nickel. The results of the study, however, were not released until 2011, at which point two executives from Goldcorp were taken to the Honduran court to defend themselves against charges that they had contaminated the environment and caused serious medical crises. The judge ruled in favour of the company, despite the fact that one of the people tested in 2007 – five-year old Lesly Yaritza – died in 2010 after suffering from a degenerative muscle condition in her legs that left her barely able to walk at the time of her tragic and premature death.[700]

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[699] Interview with Carlos Amador, May 8, 2012.

[700] Lauren Carasik and Grahame Russell, "Honduras: Goldcorp Inc and the Death of Lesly Yaritza," *Indigenous Peoples Issues and Resources*, December 24, 2011. Available at: http://indigenouspeoplesissues.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=13400:honduras-goldcorp-inc-and-the-death-of-lesly-yaritza&catid=30&Itemid=63

Meanwhile, Goldcorp faced no sanction from the Canadian state and is hailed by the Canadian media as an exemplar of corporate social responsibility.[701] The company has been named one of the best 100 Canadian companies to work for, by *The Globe and Mail*, and even one of the top 10 companies, by the *National Post*.[702] In 2011, Goldcorp spent a quick $25,000 to whisk five Canadian Members of Parliament down to Guatemala to be wined-and-dined around its mining operations there,[703] at just the same moment that momentum was gathering around a social movement-led health tribunal investigating Goldcorp's activities in Central America which, not surprisingly, found Goldcorp guilty of major violations of public health and safety:

> We find Goldcorp guilty for its activities in Honduras, Guatemala and Mexico, which we find to be seriously damaging to the health and the quality of life, the quality of environment, and the right to self determination of the affected Indigenous and campesino communities. We also find the States where the

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[701] So-called "corporate social responsibility" (CSR) is a dubious concept at best, and certainly one that can hardly be said to apply to Goldcorp. Emerging in the 1970s as part of a rhetorical shift to re-brand the corporation as a benevolent institution, CSR was more fully embraced in the 1990s in response to the growing popularity of the anti-globalization movement. Proponents of CSR typically argue that corporations ought to be responsible not just to their shareholders but also to their stakeholders; that is, rather than be solely concerned with making profits, they should consider the consequences of their actions on anyone that might be affected. While this sounds like a noble goal, the iron laws of capitalism are such that companies that genuinely place social welfare about profits will, almost inevitably, find their profits dwindling and will be faced with the choice of abandoning their CSR efforts or going bankrupt. Though a handful of examples seem to defy this expectation, they can usually be explained by the fact that companies that appear to have good records of responsible behaviour can market themselves as such and, as a result, people will be more likely to support their products. One may reasonably ask whether CSR, then, actually amounts to a new form of marketing, especially in a context where it is often exceedingly difficult for consumers to validate companies' claims of their own responsible behaviour. If Goldcorp, for instance, can claim to be socially responsible and receive public accolades for its behaviour when the reality of its activities is so dramatically different from this portrayal, it casts a rather absurd light on the entire notion of CSR. The phenomenon, however, remains powerfully popular and has spawned a massive academic and popular literature among those who wish to find a way to save capitalism from itself and who see CSR as a way out of the destructive patterns of profit-seeking behaviour. For a few different takes on CSR, please see Joel Bakan, *The Corporation*, Penguin Books, Toronto, 2004. Bill McKibben, "Hype VS Hope: Is Corporate Do-Goodery for Real?" *Mother Jones*, November/December 2006. Milton Friedman, "The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits," *New York Times Magazine*, September 13, 1970.

[702] "Awards and Recognition," *Goldcorp.com*. Available at: http://www.goldcorp.com/English/Responsible-Mining/Awards--Recognition/default.aspx

[703] Kady O'Malley, "Lobby Watch: MPs reveal cost details of Goldcorp-funded Guatemala trip," *CBC News Online*, October 22, 2012.

> accusations come from guilty of being complicit and irresponsible for not protecting the rights of those affected by mining. We also find the Government of Canada guilty for supporting and promoting in various ways the irresponsible mining investments in Mesoamerica.[704]

The Health Tribunal was organized by a coalition of over 40 organizations from across the Americas and used liberal international guidelines as its benchmarks, including the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), the International Labor Organization's convention number 169 (ILO-169), the World Health Organization (WHO)'s Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR)'s Declaration on the Rights and Duties of Man.[705] The twelve judges were drawn from civil society organizations in seven different countries, including Canada, and they were primarily doctors, academics, public health officials, and human rights defenders.[706] Goldcorp executives, for their part, continue to boast about the supposedly responsible way in which they have shut down the San Martín mine, despite the ongoing health crises it is causing and its condemnation by the Health Tribunal. Indeed, Goldcorp is actively pursuing other operations in Honduras. On the same day that I spoke with Carlos Amador, he was warned that he could face criminal charges for his activism against a massive deforestation project on a 1,866 hectare concession to Goldcorp miles away from San Martín.

Goldcorp has extracted a great deal of wealth from Honduras and around the world; the Canadian media proudly reported in 2012 that Goldcorp was making record

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[704] "Verdict," *Tribunal Popular Internacional de Salud*, July 15, 2012. Available at: http://healthtribunal.org/the-final-verdict/

[705] "Overview," *Tribunal Popular Internacional de Salud*, July 15, 2012. Available at: http://healthtribunal.org/overview/

[706] Canadians involved in the project included Dr. David Heap from the University of Western Ontario, Judith Deutsch from the University of Toronto and Claudia Campero from the Council of Canadians. The complete list of judges can be found at: http://healthtribunal.org/the-final-verdict/

profits, which reached as high as $5.4 billion in 2011.[707] By the end of that year, Goldcorp's total value was nearly $30 billion, and while the San Martín mine had ceased operations, Goldcorp continued to be a major presence in Central America and was still actively seeking new operations in Honduras. Aura Minerals, for its part, has been recording an average of $280 million in annual revenues,[708] though, notably, its profits have been less than projected and no doubt its managers are anxious to increase productivity to prevent a sell-off.[709] The point is not whether one company or another is successful in its operations; rather, the point is that Canadian companies are heavily committed to *making* their Honduran operations successful and that, in the context of the coup and the behaviour of the military government, it has been in the interests of these companies that the Canadian government support the military government so that these companies would enjoy the best possible conditions for making profits.[710]

Indeed, what is crucial here is that none of the profits that Canadian companies have been extracting from the mining industry in Honduras would be possible without a compliant Honduran state committed to allowing these companies to behave in the ways that they do. The growing strength of the social movements in the 2000s posed a threat to Canadian mining profits insofar as they were insisting on a major increase in the level

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[707] Fiona Anderson, "Goldcorp hits revenue high," *Vancouver Sun*, February 16, 2012.
[708] Aura Minerals, Inc. "Management's Discussion and Analysis, For The Three and Nine Months Ended September 30, 2012," November 13, 2012. http://www.auraminerals.com/files/MDAQ32012.pdf
[709] This online investor's guide, called "Happy Capitalism," advised prospective investors in 2011 to be careful with Aura: http://www.happycapitalism.com/2011/04/aura-minerals-inc-trying-to-reverse-a-steep-decline/
[710] Indeed, a complicating piece of the story here that doesn't fit into the central argument but needs to be remembered is that capital can leave Honduras as quickly as it enters. It is entirely possible that the coup regime could fail in its 'race to the bottom' project of attracting further foreign investment; Canadian companies could discover that conditions for profitability in their Honduran operations might not be good enough and, as a result, they might choose to invest elsewhere. My argument that the Canadian state – in partnership with Canadian and Honduran capital – is supporting a compliant Honduran state in constructing conditions for profitability in Honduras is not disproven if those profitable conditions are not created. That would simply mean that the project was unsuccessful, a very real possibility in the volatile world created by capitalist globalization.

of Honduran state intervention. Whether by creating stronger labour, health, or environmental regulations, enforcing existing ones, forcing companies to pay higher taxes, forcing companies to carry out legitimate community consultations before breaking dirt on new operations, or by any number of other means, Hondurans were expressing a clear and vocal message that the status quo – mega-profits for Canadian firms at the expense of Hondurans – was not acceptable.[711] To the extent that Zelaya was listening, and that the *Constituyente* might have actually made some of those changes real, Canadian firms had much to lose from that reform project and much to gain by a resurgent Honduran Right in power.

This dynamic is as visible in the mining sector as anywhere, since it was no secret that Zelaya's moratorium on new concessions was blocking the further development of potentially profitable investment in mining and since Canada was so active in writing the new mining code. In 2010, Canadian Ambassador Neil Reeder and CIDA representative Daniel Arsenault were in Honduras for meetings with Breakwater Resources about how to influence the direction of the new mining code.[712] Sure enough, over the following months, high-level discussions between Canadian and Honduran state officials and mining companies were held regularly, and a DFAIT mission in 2011 reported that "Honduras is in the process of transformation from the anti-mining Zelaya administration to the pro-sustainable mining and pro-CSR Lobo government,"[713] a rather farcical misrepresentation for those familiar with the situation. By 2012, Canada's role in developing the new mining codes was public knowledge; the Honduran newspaper *El*

[711] Interview with Pedro Landa, May 4, 2012.
[712] Todd Gordon, "Military Coups are Good for Canadian Business: the Canada-Honduras Free Trade Agreement," *The Bullet*, March 8, 2011.
[713] DFAIT, quoted in Jennifer Moore, "Canada's Promotion..."

Heraldo proudly asserted that ministers from the two countries had agreed that Honduras would "contract consultants using Canadian funds to analyze the law in order to ensure that it includes minimum international standards and such that the experience of Canada is also reflected in the law."[714]

Though both countries cloak their statements in the discourse of corporate social responsibility, the proposed legislation itself put the lie to this rhetoric. On January 23, 2013, the new mining code was passed, despite contravening plenty of the basic rights guaranteed to Hondurans under the 1982 constitution, and despite the fact that 91% of Hondurans reported that they did not support the status quo for mining operations, as reflected in the new code.[715] The new laws gave mining companies almost unlimited access to water for use in their operations, leaving only 10% of the country's water protected for Honduran communities. Concessions were re-opened to being granted and the new laws allow for concessions with no limits; theoretically companies could be granted parcels of land in perpetuity. They place no restrictions on the use of acid drainage, and therefore leave no protection for communities against long-term groundwater contamination.[716] At the same time, they assert that no authority can declare any territory permanently prohibited from mining, generating a legal loophole that companies will likely be able to use if they seek concessions on territory otherwise protected by the Honduran state. Calling mining an activity of "public interest," the new laws provide no safeguards for communities which fall within concessioned territory,

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[714] *El Heraldo*, quoted in Jennifer Moore, "Canada's Promotion..."
[715] Marvin Palacios, "De cada 100 hondurenos y hondurenas, 91 se oponen a la mineria a cielo abierto," *Defensores en linea*, March 27, 2012. Available at: http://www.defensoresenlinea.com/cms/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1938:de-cada-100-hondurenos-y-hondurenas-91-se-oponen-a-la-mineria-a-cielo-abierto&catid=58:amb&Itemid=181
[716] Jennifer Moore, "Honduran Mining Law Passed and Ratified, but the Fight is Not Over," *Mining Watch Canada*, January 24, 2013. Available at: http://www.miningwatch.ca/news/honduran-mining-law-passed-and-ratified-fight-not-over

which will only make it easy for mining companies to displace Indigenous communities from their land.[717] They deepen the shroud of secrecy around mining operations, allowing companies to withhold technical and financial information from the public.[718]

Finally, the "security tax" that the Lobo government had proposed in 2012 was added to the new mining code such that companies will pay a 2% tax to the state that is earmarked specifically for security costs. As I argued in Chapter 6, this tax will only deepen the relationship between the security apparatus and the mining companies that they are now directly being paid to protect.[719] The new mining code, developed with the direct input of Canadian state officials, will serve to open Honduran people and resources to ever greater exploitation at the hands of Canadian enterprise, offering a rather stark demonstration of the collusion between the Canadian state, the Honduran coup regime, and Canadian mining companies.

CANADA'S DIRECT INVESTMENTS – MAQUILADORAS

Quebec-based Gildan Activewear announced record profits in the final quarter of 2012 – some $89 million in just three months – and boasted of a strong positive outlook for 2013.[720] It is also one of the most infamous sweatshop employers in the world. With a laundry list of labour violations so well-documented that they make up a major portion of the company's "Wikipedia" entry[721] and, with over 18,000 employees, it is the largest

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[717] Indeed, ANAMINH director Gabino Carbajal reassured investors that the new laws would not interfere with their operations. Reuters reported that he "applauded the law and did not believe the caveat of giving locals a deciding say would be a problem," which suggests rather clearly that the law does not actually give locals a deciding say at all. Reuters, "Honduras ends mining moratorium, approves taxes," January 24, 2013.

[718] Interview with Pedro Landa, March 3, 2013.

[719] Interview with Pedro Landa, March 3, 2013.

[720] Gildan, "Gildan Activewear Announces Record Quarterly Results and Projects Strong Earnings Outlook for Fiscal 2013," Press Release, November 29, 2012.

[721] Wikipedia, of course, is not a source of reliable information. It can, however, be an interesting benchmark of public opinion and information; since its entries are collectively written by Wikipedia users,

private-sector employer in Honduras.[722] Like its counterparts in the mining industry, Gildan is heralded by the Canadian mainstream media as a leader in responsible corporate practices, named by the *Globe and Mail* and *MacLean's* as being among Canada's top 50 "corporate citizens."[723] Nevertheless, the company has been publicly shamed for its practices on a consistent basis since it began shifting its manufacturing from North America to the Global South in the late 1990s, with its Honduran operations among its most notorious.

Details of Gildan's activities are very difficult to obtain, especially as its host government in Honduras is increasingly protecting companies from public scrutiny, as evidenced in the new mining code described above. The *maquiladora* industry is particularly notorious in this regard. When Honduras made international headlines in the 1990s following an expose of Kathie Lee Gifford's celebrity-branded clothing line, it was a result of an exhaustive series of investigations through garbage dumps and rubbish bins in Honduras and the Dominican Republic by Charles Kernaghan and the National Labour Committee (NLC). As Joel Bakan describes in his important work on the modern corporate form, *The Corporation*:

> Following garbage trucks to dumps and then sifting through what they leave behind is helpful, Kernaghan has found, for discovering the locations of factories in the new global economy and for finding out what goes on inside them... "They hide these factories and sweatshops around the world," says Kernaghan, and refuse requests for the factories' names and addresses

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they can provide a useful sketch of public perceptions. It is instructive, then, that Gildan's record of violent, abusive, exploitative, and often illegal labour practices make up the majority of its Wikipedia entry, signalling that there is a widespread awareness of Gildan's record, despite the Canadian state's support for its activities.

[722] Steven Chase, "In a Bid to Enter New Markets, Harper Lands Free-Trade Deal with Honduras," *The Globe and Mail*, September 6, 2012.

[723] Gildan, "Recognition," available at: http://www.genuinegildan.com/en/company/recognition/

> "because they know it's easier to exploit teenagers behind locked metal gates, with armed guards, behind barbed wire."[724]

Kernaghan's interventions with the NLC in Honduras were somewhat effective in exposing the outrageous conditions in Honduran sweatshops to North American audiences and were an important part of the building momentum around anti-sweatshop activism in North America at that moment. The legacy of that work is contested in Honduras. The Honduran media – controlled by the same parties as the *maquiladoras* – framed Kernaghan as a "puppet" of the imperial powers and treated the Honduran sweatshop workers who collaborated with Kernaghan as if they, too, were traitors to the country. Even the maquila workers were divided on whether it made sense to rely on Northerners' support in the struggles in their own workplaces.[725]

Nevertheless, Kernaghan and the activists he worked with in the late 1990s did important work in a moment when the Honduran social movement was just beginning to recover from the trauma and dislocation of the 1980s. But by the late 2000s, local worker-activists no longer relied on outside assistance in locating and documenting sweatshop operations. Between reports from movement activists and Gildan's own records, then, it is not impossible to construct a fairly clear picture of the company's operations in Honduras. According to Gildan's annual report for 2011, it operated three major textile facilities in Honduras, in addition to two smaller sock factories and a network of smaller sewing operations. Indeed, the company called Honduras its "largest manufacturing hub" and has been actively constructing new facilities and acquiring existing workshops in Honduras since the June 2009 coup; in 2012 Gildan bought out

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[724] Joel Bakan, *The Corporation*, Penguin Books, Toronto, 2004, p. 65-66.
[725] Adrienne Pine, *Working Hard, Drinking Hard: On Violence and Survival in Honduras*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2008, p. 140-155.

Anvil Knitwear, which ran its own textile factories in Honduras including the Star S.A. factory in El Progreso, a case to which I will return. It is notable that one of Gildan's other major manufacturing hubs is in Haiti, arguably the poorest country in the Caribbean basin and another country where Canada's political interference is well-documented.[726]

It would be outside the scope of this project to detail Gildan's complete record of exploitative behaviour in Honduras over the past decade. Instead, I will highlight those cases where the Canadian state cannot have claimed ignorance of Gildan's record in order to demonstrate the extent to which the Canadian state has supported the company directly or indirectly, especially in its support for the coup regime since 2009. As far back as 2002, Gildan's factory in El Progreso was a source of some embarrassment, as its miserable treatment of workers was brought into the Canadian mainstream by a *CBC* television special. Health and safety violations, less than living wages, sexual harassment and gender-based discrimination against its primarily female workforce, and a litany of other exploitative measures made international headlines, and the workers at the El Progreso factory began organizing to form a union and fight back.[727] In 2003-04, nearly 100 workers were fired for being involved in the unionization effort, but the Canadian government, under the Liberal leadership of Jean Chrétien, brazenly ignored the mounting evidence of Gildan's labour violations and awarded it, through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), an "Excellence in Corporate Social and Ethical Responsibility Award," to bolster its legitimacy as it denied that it was

[726] As noted in Chapter 2, Canada was instrumental in the overthrow of the democratically-elected government of Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 2004 and has subsequently become part of a semi-permanent occupation force in the country. See Justin Podur, *Haiti's New Dictatorship: The Coup, The Earthquake and the UN Occupation*, Pluto Press, London, 2012.

[727] The segment, titled "Sewing Discontent," was aired as part of the program *Disclosure*, but is no longer available at the CBC website, despite being referenced in the sidebar to related news articles, such as this one, published around the same time, on anti-sweatshop activism in Canada. http://www.cbc.ca/marketplace/pre-2007/files/home/cutitout/index.html

mistreating its workers.[728] Honduran and Canadian labour organizations continued to file official complaints, and when the pressure became too great, Gildan simply closed the factory, laid off its 1800 workers, and shifted more production to its other plants.[729] The case of the El Progreso plant is important insofar as it demonstrates that the Canadian state was, as far back as the early 2000s, directly implicated in Gildan's behaviour.

This dynamic has followed Gildan wherever it has gone in Honduras. Between 2008 and 2011, the U.S.-based labour NGO Workers Rights Consortium (WRC) documented systematic persecution of workers who were trying to organize unions at Gildan and Anvil factories. Workers would be fired or threatened with being blacklisted across the sector so that they would not find any work, would suffer verbal, physical and sexual harassment from managers and from other workers, and received death threats which, as Chapter 6 described, had to be taken very seriously in the Honduran context.[730] At the one factory where workers successfully formed a union, Star S.A., the union leaders have faced constant harassment. As WRC reported:

> In early May, a worker from the cutting department approached [union president Waldin] Banegas in the training room and said, "it would be cheap to get you all killed. They will charge me 5,000 lempiras to kill all six of you." It was clear that he was referring to the six members of the union's leadership committee... Workers who choose to form unions are well aware of this context, and have legitimate reason to be extremely concerned about threats of violence. According to the [International Trade Union Confederation], at least fifteen union leaders have been killed in the last three years.[731]

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[728] Gordon, *Imperialist Canada*, p. 250-251.
[729] Gordon, *Imperialist Canada*, p. 251.
[730] Workers Rights Consortium, "Case Summary, Star, S.A. (Honduras), October 1, 2008. Available at: http://www.workersrights.org/Freports/Case%20Summary%20-%20Star%20_Honduras_.pdf
[731] Workers Rights Consortium, "Workers Rights Consortium Assessment, Star, S.A. (Honduras): Findings, Recommendations and Status" October 12, 2012. Available at: http://www.workersrights.org/Freports/WRC%20Assessment%20re%20Star%20%28Honduras%29%20-%2010.12.12.pdf

WRC's most recent report on the Star, S.A. factory makes it very clear that not only was management aware of the threats, they were often in collusion with the perpetrators. A useful demonstration of that collusion can be found in the story of Rafael Magana, a particularly aggressive anti-union worker who has been accused of threatening unionists since the mid-2000s. During a 2009 job action, Magana told a union leader "the time you have left to live is the time I give you. I have you in my hands." In 2012, he said he would "destroy" the union and told another activist that "the cemetery [was] full of brave people." WRC reports on his relationship to Gildan/Anvil management:

> Multiple workers provided evidence that Human Resources staff at Star not only tolerated Magana's behavior, but colluded with certain workers in promoting anti-union messages in the plant. According to credible, mutually corroborated worker testimony, Magana enjoyed a privileged relationship with Human Resources Manager Wendy Aguirre and met with her regularly in her office. Magana's meetings with her also often included two other workers who also are vocally anti-union. Aguirre did not meet regularly with other workers with similar job responsibilities. Magana and these other two workers often had access to information before other workers, indicating that they received information from Aguirre or other managers.[732]

WRC was in communication with Gildan while carrying out the report, but Gildan denied any knowledge of the anti-union activities:

> Gildan states that, "we have not been provided with and are not aware of any evidence that these complaints of harassment were in fact reported to management." The workers who were the victims of this harassment, however, testified to the WRC that they reported these incidents to management repeatedly, both before and after Gildan's [2012] acquisition of the plant [from Anvil Knitwear].[733]

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[732] Workers Rights Consortium, "Workers Rights Consortium Assessment, Star, S.A. (Honduras): Findings, Recommendations and Status" October 12, 2012. Available at: http://www.workersrights.org/Freports/WRC%20Assessment%20re%20Star%20%28Honduras%29%20-%2010.12.12.pdf

[733] Workers Rights Consortium, "Workers Rights Consortium Assessment, Star, S.A. (Honduras): Findings, Recommendations and Status" October 12, 2012. Available at:

Moreover, it is worth describing in a bit more detail the nature of Gildan's treatment of its employees, even under "normal" conditions, in order to fully grapple with what the Canadian state is endeavouring to support. As noted above, the best source of credible information on the conditions of Honduran sweatshops today are the workers themselves. One of the most important Honduran organizations involved with *maquiladora* workers is the women's collective, *Colectiva de Mujeres Hondureñas* (CODEMUH), and I have interviewed, on a few occasions, one of its general coordinators, Maria Luisa Regalado. Among other things, she reports that the women employed by Gildan often work up to eleven-hour shifts and avoid getting up to go to the bathroom for fear of not meeting their quotas. The quotas themselves are reinforced by dividing the women into "teams," with each team responsible for a certain level of production and punished collectively if that level isn't met; for instance, company supervisors will sometimes withhold workers' lunch tickets if their team fails to meet its quotas.[734]

The result, predictably, is that the women are encouraged to discipline one another to work harder, and as many of them develop serious health problems, they are injected with painkillers by company doctors in order to prolong their ability to work. As their bodies collapse and their productivity falls, they are dropped into lower wage categories. Indeed, the workers are routinely assessed for what percentage of fitness they are at and paid accordingly; that is, if the doctor claims that a worker is operating at 50% physical capacity, she will be paid at 50% of the full wage. When the painkillers are no

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http://www.workersrights.org/Freports/WRC%20Assessment%20re%20Star%20%28Honduras%29%20-%2010.12.12.pdf

[734] Interview with Maria Luisa Regalado, May 11, 2012.

longer enough and workers are no longer able to keep up, they are often fired without warning or compensation.[735]

Among the package of neoliberal shocks that the Lobo government has passed since the coup is a new set of regulations around temporary work, which has given employers like Gildan an ideal loophole to get around the relatively minor social securities that do exist in Honduran law. Under the new temporary work laws, Gildan hires temporary workers for periods of up to two months and then lets them go completely; during that time they have no access to any social security, no leaves or support for pregnancy, and no vacation time. In addition, Gildan is often able to cloak its activities by using subcontracted companies; for instance, Gildan forces potential employees to submit to humiliating physical examinations, conducted by a private Honduran firm. Regalado describes the examinations:

> The exams are physical and psychological. It is very invasive; the women have to take their clothes off, down to their underwear. Doctors touch every part of their body, and if they let on that they feel any pain at all, they may not get the job... the women have to get down on their knees and they are touched on the legs, their arms, their shoulders, everywhere.[736]

These allegations are dramatic, and they are supported by nearly every investigation into factory conditions with the exception of those undertaken by the company itself.[737] In 2008, Adrienne Pine reported the complaints she most commonly

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[735] Interview with Maria Luisa Regalado, May 11, 2012.
[736] Interview with Maria Luisa Regalado, May 11, 2012.
[737] In 2011, for instance, CODEMUH presented a comprehensive complaint to the Fair Labor Association (FLA) about Gildan's treatment of its workforce. Gildan responded by initiating an examination of its own practices which, not surprisingly, came back with a rosy picture of a socially responsible company. CODEMUH sent the complaint back to the FLA, but the response from that organization was disappointing to CODEMUH and its supporters in the North American-based Maquila Solidarity Network, which claimed that the FLA report ignored the root causes of the problems at Gildan factories and did not investigate the long-term health problems associated with working at Gildan. Please see Maquila Solidarity Network,

heard: "the chemicals used in production (formaldehyde and others), the lint particles (*tamo*)... the aches and boredom associated with repetitive tasks, and the unrelenting discipline – and associated humiliation – of factory work."[738] Pine goes on to describe a conversation she had with a doctor who had once worked for one of the *maquiladoras*, who explained that workers who needed treatment had to work while they waited to see the doctor, lest productivity should drop, meaning that their bodies were being pushed even as they were trying to get help for existing problems.[739]

What is more, the *maquiladoras* are notorious for the regulation of their workers' reproductive rights, enforcing regular pregnancy tests and hiring and firing women based on the results; this regulation of women's bodies is significant, especially in light of the measures the coup regime itself has taken to institutionalize the same restrictions at the state level,[740] and it is worth quoting Pine at length on this:

> Pregnancy is a great threat to productivity and a high cost to employers, who are legally obligated to pay maternity leave. When applying for a *maquiladora* job, and again after the two-month probation period during which new hires are paid at a reduced rate, a young woman must submit to a pregnancy test. If the test result is positive, she is not hired; thus her "training period" provides cheaper labour for the employers. As [former *maquila* doctor] Dr. Zavela said to me, "the pregnancy test is the true employment test." Employers try to get around paying

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"FLA investigation ignores root causes of workplace injuries," September 5, 2012. Available at: http://en.maquilasolidarity.org/node/1087

[738] Pine, 157.

[739] Pine, 159.

[740] It is also, however, worth noting that there are contradictory logics at work here. On the one hand, the increased regulation of women's bodies is a project shared by the *maquiladora* industry (which is seeking to stop women from getting pregnant and taking maternity leave) and the state (which is seeking to placate the *maquiladora* owners but is also catering to far-right Evangelical Christian movements and a patriarchal tradition that is somewhat bolstered in Honduras by the increase in women's employment spurred on by the *maquila* sector.) There is an agreement by the predominantly male leaders of state and industry that women's bodies should be controlled by men, but there is a contradiction that arises between the different goals these groups have; factory owners want productive workers, so they want to prevent pregnancy and, as a result, they sometimes force women to use birth control or provide abortions from company doctors, while the traditional patriarchal leadership seeks to ban all forms of contraception and coerce women to behave with 'moderation' and chastity.

> maternity leave by making the workplace so inhospitable to the pregnant worker that she quits, thereby forfeiting the severance pay due her had she been fired. In some factories, women are obligated to take birth control pills and, if they do become pregnant, are faced with the choice between keeping the baby or keeping the job. Dr. Zavela informed me that in the *maquila* where he worked, management encouraged doctors to provide abortions as a cost-saving measure.[741]

CODEMUH has filed hundreds of reports of health violations at Gildan's factories – mostly muscular-skeletal issues in the shoulders and backs as a result of conducting some 40-50 repetitive actions per minute – and despite consistent efforts to dialogue with the company on these matters they have found that, rather than supporting workers with health problems, Gildan actually punishes them.[742]

Moreover, as noted in Chapter 6, the physical and structural violence inflicted on the women in Gildan's factories has a direct relationship to the broader dynamics of violence in Honduran streets and homes, especially since 2009. To cite just one example, as Gildan requires more and more hours of work from its employees, and as those hours go later into the night and are not up for negotiation, women find themselves forced to travel home from work well after dark, where they often face harassment and physical violence from men in the streets, especially police. "In one meeting, we had twelve women from the factories and we asked if any of them faced violence to and from work," Regalado reported. "Every single one of them said that they had been assaulted between one and three times."[743]

It is hard to imagine the Canadian state openly declaring itself in favour of the dynamics described here. Nevertheless, it is precisely these conditions that Honduran

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[741] Pine, 164.
[742] Interview with Maria Luisa Regalado, May 11, 2012.
[743] Interview with Maria Luisa Regalado, May 11, 2012.

social movements have been struggling against over the past decade, and Canada's endorsement of the military regime since 2009 has placed it firmly on the side of *maquiladora* owners like Gildan. Canada's position cannot be explained by ignorance; CODEMUH sent an open letter to Prime Minister Harper in 2011 in anticipation of the Canada-Honduras FTA, insisting that the Canadian government take Gildan's mistreatment of workers seriously:

> The Honduran Women's Collective, CODEMUH, has continually and systematically produced information about the vulnerable position faced by workers in the *maquila* industry in Honduras, about the violation of human and labour rights, and the damages done to the health of workers by their work activities, especially in the company Gildan Activewear, a transnational company owned by Canadians. [...] We demand that you ask promptly for a report on labour and human rights conditions for the women and men who work at Gildan Activewear installations in Honduras; and that the Canadian government monitors working conditions for workers with Canadian transnationals. The Canadian government must force companies to comply with national laws, international conventions and international treaties to do with human and labour rights and corporate social responsibility.[744]

It does not appear that the Canadian government will pursue CODEMUH's requests to force Gildan to comply with international labour treaties. Instead, Gildan continues to receive accolades for its commitment to corporate social responsibility in the Canadian media, and when Prime Minister Harper signed the FTA in Honduras, he "praised Gildan's conduct in Honduras" as a leader in responsible behaviour after a visit to one of its factories, and he asserted that "[Canada is] always concerned about the image and record of Canadian companies when they are involved in business anywhere in the

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[744] CODEMUH, "Open Letter," August 12, 2011. Available at: http://www.waronwant.org/attachments/Codemuh%20Open%20Letter%20to%20Canadian%20%20Prime%20Minister%20English.pdf The full text of the letter is reproduced here as Appendix G.

world."[745] His comments buttressed the statements made the previous year by Peter Kent, who claimed that "Canadians should be proud" of Gildan Activewear and its peers in Honduras.[746] Nevertheless, in the aftermath of the coup, when even U.S. sweatshop employers Nike and Adidas spoke out against the interruption of democracy and the violent repression, Gildan proceeded with "business as usual," and suggested that the coup would potentially be good for Gildan since it would likely bring a more business-friendly government.[747]

CANADA'S DIRECT INVESTMENTS – TOURISM

The third significant sector for Canadian investors in Honduras is the growing tourist trade on the country's north coast and the Bay Islands. In the months following the 2009 coup, letters poured into Ottawa and Washington from the North American residents in the region, pressuring their governments to support the coup regime and its commitments to developing the tourist industry. Tom Stollery, Canadian investor in Villas Paraiso Escondido, a 40-acre resort on the North Coast, wrote to Prime Minister Harper on behalf of the company in July 2009 to express concern over its "support" for President Zelaya. As I described in Chapter 6, Canada could hardly be said to have supported Zelaya. Nevertheless, the letter from Canadian investors is instructive:

> If Zelaya is allowed to return to power in Honduras and with outside influence from the ALBA group of countries it will result in the loss of democracy, freedom of speech and human rights for all Hondurans. The removal of democracy in Honduras will stop foreign investment and will result in financial losses to

[745] Steven Chase, "Harper Exits Honduras With A New Free-Trade Deal," *The Globe and Mail*, August 12, 2011.
[746] Peter Kent, quoted in Maxwell A. Cameron, "A Diplomatic Theatre of the Absurd: Canada, the OAS and the Honduran Coup," *NACLA Report on the Americas*, Vol. 43, No. 3, May/June 2010, p. 20.
[747] Canadian Council for International Cooperation, "Honduras: Democracy Denied," Report from the CCIC's Americas Policy Group with Recommendations to the Government of Canada, April 2010, p. 19.

> foreign and Canadian investments in that country. This loss of investment will ultimately cause economic hardship for Honduras and its people which is already one of the poorest countries in the western hemisphere.[748]

Notwithstanding the dubious claim that Zelaya – and not the coup government – posed a threat to Honduran democracy and human rights, it is worth noting how quickly and clearly the terrain of the letter's discourse shifts to the protection of Canadian investment. Stollery may well have been right that the direction Zelaya was taking could have resulted in financial losses to Canadian investors, given this project of social democratic reform, but his insistence that Canadian investment in Honduras was protecting people from economic hardship is rather unconvincing.

Another letter-writer from a North American resort complained that tourism was suffering as a result of the "lies" being told about bloodshed in Honduras and insisted that:

> Roatán is an island over 30 miles from the mainland of Honduras. Roatán is technically a part of Honduras, but they are worlds apart in culture and geographical location. The political unrest occurred only on mainland Honduras. On the island of Roatán, we have had no incidents of any kind. It remains peaceful, tranquil and beautiful.[749]

The author of this letter was, of course, not entirely incorrect. The tourist enclave in Honduras' north *is* worlds apart from the rest of the country, insofar as it increasingly functions as a tropical playground for North American adventurers and retirees, protected from the realities of Honduran life by an infrastructure and security apparatus designed to

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[748] Tom Stollery, quoted in Rights Action, "Pro-Coup North Americans in Honduras," November 10, 2009. Available at: http://www.rightsaction.org/Alerts/Honduran_coup_resistance_day136_alert88__111009.html

[749] Penelope Leigh, quoted in Rights Action, "Pro-Coup North Americans in Honduras," November 10, 2009. Available at: http://www.rightsaction.org/Alerts/Honduran_coup_resistance_day136_alert88__111009.html

invisibilize the stark inequality and exploitation that makes Honduras such a prime location for these resorts and villas in the first place.

Indeed, the attraction for Canadian investors is the price; with some property being sold for as little as $85 per square foot, the emerging North Coast retirement communities are becoming increasingly popular among Canadian seniors looking for a cheaper place to set up in the sun.[750] Tourism from Canada represents the largest source of income in the industry in Honduras, and as property developers gradually expand their scope in the country's north, the result is increased conflict between land developers and local communities. In particular, North Coast developers are snapping up land – buying it for cheap, through a variety of often-sketchy means – that is claimed as protected land by Honduras' Garífuna people. As far back as 1992, the Marbella Tourist Corporation began seizing land near Triunfo de la Cruz, prompting conflict between the company and the newly formed *Comité de Defensa de las Tierras de Triunfo de la Cruz* (CODETT) which culminated, in 1997, in the murder of three community leaders and incarceration on trumped up charges of a fourth.[751]

As the industry grew, it often took the form of ecotourist developments like marine parks and biological reserves which were promoted in the language of sustainability and environmental protection but actually served to facilitate the grabbing of Garífuna land for ultimately destructive and unsustainable practices. One 1993 decree, for instance, banned any extraction of marine life from the North Coast waters, effectively criminalizing local fishing and lobster catching, essential aspects of Garífuna

[750] Dawn Paley, "Snowbirds Gone Wild! Canadian Retirees and Locals Clash in Honduras," *This Magazine*, November 4, 2010.
[751] Tanya Kerssen, *Grabbing Power: The New Struggles for Land, Food and Democracy in Northern Honduras*, Oakland, Food First Books, 2013, p. 76.

cultural and economic life. This, despite the fact that Garífuna practices were, in fact, environmentally sustainable and woven into the fabric of community life; Garífuna fishing posed no threat to fish stocks, but banning fishing facilitated the establishment of scuba diving resorts and marine reserves for tourists.[752] Similar restrictions were applied to practices like logging; indeed, while foreign mining companies were deforesting massive swaths of land on their concessions, small Garífuna communities were being blocked from minor, sustainable, subsistence practices like using local palm trees to repair their homes.

Meanwhile, the tourist projects that have moved in have not, themselves, adhered to any meaningful standards of sustainable development. *Envío* correspondant Ismael Moreno describes:

> Many of the new roads on [the Bay] Islands are unstable and promote widespread erosion, siltation of offshore coasts, and deterioration of steambeds and waterbeds. Shoreline construction of hotels, restaurants, marinas, beaches, and housing has destroyed mangroves and corals. Hundreds of wells have been dug indiscriminately, leading to saltwater infiltration of the groundwater, disruption of groundwater flows and diminished stream quality.[753]

Overdevelopment of scuba projects and other tourist activities weakened the North Coast ecology – and the Garífuna communities that had traditionally protected it – and left the region especially vulnerable to disasters like Hurricane Mitch. Tourist businesses gradually bought up land by taking advantage of ambiguities in the nature of land titling – ie. buying land from individual Garifuna "landowners" rather than negotiating with the communities at large – usually beginning with forested or coastal territory, so that the developments came to more or less surround the actual villages and settlements. This

[752] Kerssen, 76-77.
[753] Ismael Moreno, quoted in Kerssen, 79.

slowly cut the communities off from their resource bases and weakened them such that it became easier to buy out individual residential plots, hastening the full encroachment of companies in traditional territory.[754]

What is more, the supposed benefits of the increased tourist trade have yet to "trickle down" to the Hondurans who claim the land as their own.[755] Tanya Kerssen describes the experience:

> [Neoliberal initiatives] have succeeded in restructuring the northern coast to facilitate investment and accumulation by both international investors and the Honduran oligarchy. Indeed, Garífuna communities have been boxed in on all sides, with Facusse's palm oil and Dole's pineapple plantations; the enclosure of coastal waters and wilderness areas for tourism; the criminalization of subsistence activities; and the usurpation of community lands.[756]

As Honduran journalist Felix Molina describes it, the North Coast region is experiencing a "new Apartheid," as walls are being built – quite literally – to keep the Garífuna separated from the growing community of Canadian retirees.[757] Indeed, it appears that Garífuna culture holds less appeal, to the northerners who bring down their dollars to experience a sterilized version of local custom, than that of the Maya; the resorts typically offer tokenized presentations of "traditional Mayan culture" even while they are actively undermining the traditional existence of the Garífuna.[758]

The emblematic case of Canadian investment in Honduran tourism is that of Life Vision Properties, owned by Canadian pornography magnate Randy Jorgensen. Building

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[754] Kerssen, 79-80.
[755] Whether tourism can ever have positive local impacts is rather debatable. Julian T. Pinter's 2010 film *Land*, filmed in Nicaragua not far from the Honduran tourist enclaves, offers a bleak look at tourism and land development as neo-colonialism. Julian T. Pinter, *Land*, 7th Art, 2010.
[756] Kerssen, 84.
[757] Interview with Felix Molina, May 2, 2012.
[758] A dynamic reminiscent of my analysis of North American fascination with the 'mysterious' Maya, in Chapter 3.

on two decades of success and notoriety with his Adults Only Video retail chain, Jorgensen now buys and sells property in Honduras through Life Vision and constructs the infrastructure on those sites through his Jaguar Construction company.[759] Indeed, Jorgensen is positioning himself as one of the key figures in the development of the North Coast tourist industry, his "Banana Coast" cruise port development poised to become Honduras' largest. The collusion between Jorgensen and the Honduran state is not veiled: Life Vision Properties' website features a promotional video in which Pepe Lobo himself speaks directly to potential investors, assuring them that Honduras is an attractive place for their money:

> Honduras is located in the heart of America in a region that acts as the central axis for Global commerce. As a nation, we have made significant progress in terms of infrastructure, technology and innovation. We have subscribed free trade agreements that grant our products access to major markets in the world in a highly competitive manner. We have a new legal and regulatory framework for investment promotion and protection making us one of the most attractive places to invest in Latin America. Join us. Come to Honduras.[760]

With direct support from the Honduran state and armed forces, it is hardly a surprise that Jorgensen is not worried about local opposition. When Canadian journalist Dawn Paley asked him about Garífuna claims that his properties were being built on land that belongs to them collectively, his response was instructive:

> For Canadians, the easiest way to compare it is to compare it to our own native Indians in Canada... Depending on what's going on, they may or may not decide that they have a land claim going on... As soon as there is any development going on generally, the Garífuna start checking around and seeing if there isn't some

[759] Karen Spring, "Canadian Porn Kings, Tourism 'Development' Projects, Repression and the Violation of Indigenous-Garifuna Rights in Honduras," *Rights Action Bulletin*, February 14, 2011.
[760] Porfirio 'Pepe' Lobo, quoted in Life Vision Properties promotional video, available at: http://www.realestate-investments.co/caribbean-real-estate-for-sale/

> way that they can extort some funds or something out of whoever is doing that development.[761]

It seems quite clear from Jorgensen's dismissive response to the idea of Indigenous land claims – in Honduras or Canada – that he does not take seriously even the possibility that the Garífuna could have a legitimate grievance.

But Garífuna communities have been organizing against Jorgensen and the emerging tourist trade since the mid-2000s. Evaristo Perez Ambular, a Garífuna organizer based in Trujillo, has been struggling for nearly a decade against Canadian companies: "there are many Canadians in our communities on the coast, and we haven't seen a positive presence from them," he said. "They use our bridges and our roads, and they don't leave us a thing."[762] Much of the property held by Jorgensen was bought for cheap from one individual falsely claiming to represent the Garífuna communities in the region in 2007. Community leaders have denied that the individual ever had the right to sell the land, but the Honduran state has upheld Jorgensen's right to the land and Jorgensen is currently developing a plan to build a $15 million port at Trujillo to receive cruise ships with an attendant set of resorts and shopping malls.[763]

Even if Jorgensen had acquired the land through a legitimate process, there is no consensus on whether foreign tourist enclaves are beneficial to their host countries. What is clear, in the Honduran case, is that they have displaced communities and upset customary practices – fishing, shipping, agriculture, and the complex dynamics and networks of traditional Garífuna culture – and have replaced those practices with an industry that adds very little new value to the Honduran economy. The money that does

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[761] Randy Jorgensen, quoted in Paley, "Snowbirds..."
[762] Evaristo Perez Ambular, quoted in Paley, "Snowbirds..."
[763] Karen Spring, "Canada's Ongoing Support for Honduras Regime," *Rights Action Bulletin*, January 10, 2011.

trickle into the pockets of Hondurans comes predominantly in the form of the low wages paid to resort service staff and in the growing market for cheap Honduran prostitution.[764] International reporting on the HIV crisis in Honduras' north regularly refer to the rapidly increasing rate of prostitution, but it typically fails to connect it to the concurrent rise in North American tourist development, as if a "natural" Garífuna "promiscuity" were the real cause of the problem.[765]

Indeed, Jorgensen's advertising campaigns for his tropical resorts typically feature attractive young women in bikinis on the beach, and he was accused in 2001 of making pornographic films with underage Honduran women as actors.[766] Meanwhile, the sex industry has exploded since the resorts – and foreigners – started arriving *en masse*. Dawn Paley reports on a chilling interview with a disgraced Ontario Provincial Police officer who now lives in Trujillo:

> [Former OPP officer Rick Mowers] rattles off how much cheaper things are in Honduras, from rent and food to crack cocaine and sex. "Here sex is, in the whole country, sex is $10. So if you go downtown, and you stop and the girl gets in your car, it's $10, 200 lempiras, for you to go have intercourse," he says. Mowers didn't mention the AIDS epidemic in the north-coast region, where over 60,000 people have HIV/AIDS, the highest infection rate in Central America.[767]

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[764] Paul Jeffrey, "Sex Tourism Plagues Central America," *Response Magazine Online*. Available at: http://gbgm-umc.org/response/articles/sextourism.html

[765] For instance, the Pulitzer Centre treats the problem as though it were rooted in a cultural naivety about the importance of using condoms. See Jens Erik Gould, "HIV and the Garífuna: Coming to Terms with a Virus," *Pulitzer Centre*, January 30, 2013. In an article published a week earlier, the same author acknowledged that "the Garífuna have one of the highest HIV rates in the Western Hemisphere" and that "their culture and language are in jeopardy" but he insists that "HIV is one of the greatest threats to their survival" and says nothing about the assault on Garífuna social and cultural institutions that has led to the dramatic increases in prostitution and HIV. Jens Erik Gould, "The Forgotten: HIV and the Garífuna of Honduras," *Pulitzer Centre*, January 23, 2013.

[766] "Charged: Randy Jorgensen," *MacLean's Magazine*, December 3, 2001.

[767] Paley, "Snowbirds..."

As in the mining and garment manufacturing industries, it is clear that Canada's position on the military coup is in line with the interests of its entrepreneurs on the North Coast. Where Zelaya's reformist project increasingly opened the door to dialogue with – and even state support for – Garífuna communities struggling against these Canadian enterprises, the coup government has opened its arms to the tourist trade and demonstrated a violent disregard for Garífuna activism. When, for instance, some 200 Garífuna people established a temporary camp near Vallecito to demand that the state demarcate clearly the boundary for Garífuna land title, the *Instituto Nacional Agrario* (INA) representatives sent by the Lobo government did little to protect the Garífuna activists from heavily armed security personnel, in the employ of local oligarchs connected to the tourist trade as well as other North Coast industries, who used violence and intimidation to try to dissuade the camp from staying put.[768] The camp was largely organized by OFRANEH, the largest Garífuna-based activist organization in Honduras, and from the state's refusal to intervene to protect the camp from violence, OFRANEH concluded: "it is because [the Lobo government] supports and endorses the theft of land by the groups who have taken control of the territory in the Vallecito area."[769] That conclusion seems eminently convincing, especially given the violence that individual organizers in OFRANEH have faced since the coup, as detailed in Chapter 6, and given the rapidly expanding militarization of the region, largely in support and protection of private interests.

MAKING HONDURAS "RIGHT" FOR CANADIAN CAPITAL

[768] Kerssen, 84-85.
[769] OFRANEH, "Crisis en Vallecito (Colón): Aclaratión Pública ante Infundios del INA," August 29, 2012. Available at: http://ofraneh.wordpress.com/2012/08/29/crisis-en-vallecito-colon-aclaracion-publica-ante-infundios-del-ina/

While the direct investment of Canadian capital in Honduras demonstrates the immediate interests that the Canadian state is serving in its support for the coup government, arguably the most important piece of the relationship is to be found in the broader project that Canada is actively supporting in Honduras. Just as Smedley Butler was hired to make Honduras "right" for the banana magnates a century ago, Canada is today looking to secure a Honduras that will be "right" for Canadian investments across a variety of sectors. In a summary of Canada's new aggressive foreign policy, Greg Albo notes how Honduras fits in:

> Canada is now using its diplomatic offices and overseas funding to support destabilization efforts of governments identified as insufficiently 'market oriented.' This role has been evident in Venezuela, Bolivia, Honduras, and Ecuador.[770]

Indeed, it would be a tremendous oversimplification to imagine that Canada's posture in Honduras could be explained by a simple, straight line between the interests of individual companies and state behaviour. While it is clear that Canada's foreign policy in Honduras is partly shaped by the immediate needs of companies like Goldcorp, Gildan and Life Vision, this picture needs to be complemented by an understanding of Canada's broader interests in Honduras and, indeed, in Central America and other parts of the Global South more generally.[771]

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[770] Greg Albo, "Fewer Illusions: Canadian Foreign Policy Since 2001," in Jerome Klassen and Greg Albo, ed., *Empire's Ally: Canada and the War in Afghanistan*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2013.

[771] As argued in Chapter 2, there are a variety of factors that go into the determination of so many little pieces of Canadian foreign policy decision-making and the claim here is not that these factors are all simply reducible to the protection of Canadian economic interests. These factors include but are not limited to: the ideologies of the ruling political parties of the moment, the particular discourses and relationships that shape bilateral state relations, the individual personalities of the political agents themselves, the input of civil society groups, the positioning of the mass media on various issues, the ideological mood of the general public at a given moment, and the strength of micro- and macro-level lobby groups. The argument inherent in this project, however, is that of all the considerations and factors that shape Canadian foreign policy the most powerful and influential are those that come from the interests of capital. From there, this project is seeking to identify more particularly how those interests come to be defined – to understand the

What is at stake in Honduras, from the perspective of the Canadian state, is the promotion and protection of the conditions necessary for further profitable investment. The Zelaya government not only threatened to undermine the profits of existing Canadian businesses in Honduras, it was making moves that might have made Honduras a less profitable place to do business *in general.* There have been a number of developments, before and since the coup, that point to this broader agenda. I will use the remainder of this chapter to identify the most visible demonstrations of Canada's larger neoliberal project in Honduras and the effects that this project has on Honduran people; once again, the purpose will be to illustrate that Canada pursues this agenda in spite of its harmful effects on the human rights, economic security, and social well-being of Honduran people, thus putting the lie to the idea that Canada's foreign policy takes seriously the rhetoric of supporting democracy, human rights, and prosperity abroad.

As Albo notes above, central to the Canadian project in Honduras has been the de-stabilization of the reform projects that would have threatened its "market orientation." The agenda that Canada has pursued in Honduras since the coup speaks directly to this emphasis on prying Honduras open to ever-deeper degrees of foreign investment and exploitation. There is no better example of this than the proposal – developed out of a right-wing think tank called the McDonald-Laurier Institute – for the creation of so-called "charter cities" in Honduras. The idea was to establish in Honduran law the right of the state to grant territorial concessions to businesses within which they would possess virtual city-statehood, with their own laws, police, and foreign relations. *The Globe and Mail* celebrated the idea in April 2012:

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political economic logic of the new Canadian imperialism – and to highlight the measures the Canadian state is willing to take on behalf of Canadian capital.

> If you took a stretch of unused land in a troubled, developing nation like Honduras, set it up as a largely independent jurisdiction with the kind of rules-based governance that Canadians are used to, could that new system take hold? Could it rub off on other parts of the country and, over time, transform entire regions? ...the answer to all three questions is, most likely, yes.[772]

The author of the article, Jeremy Torobin, adds that Canadians could and should help govern the charter cities, and he argues that, while some people might call this a form of imperialism, it would have material benefits for everyone and, thus, it shouldn't matter what we call it. He even points to the example of British control of Hong Kong as an example of how "successful" such colonization can be. He concludes:

> There is a strong argument in the "enlightened self-interest" category, aside from [charter city advocate] Professor Romer's projections about the impact on global output, or the potential windfall for Canadian companies that might build some of the infrastructure for the new cities or, eventually, have billions more overseas customers who can afford to buy their products. Namely, Canada and all advanced economies have a stake in ensuring the massive urbanization occurring this century actually makes lives better instead of creating giant new filthy, chaotic, overcrowded slums... Canadians are proud of their internationalist credentials, and [charter cities] could be a template for doing good work abroad that has lasting effect, and that gets the most bang for our buck.[773]

There is much to unpack in Torobin's article, and in the "charter city" proposal itself which, as of 2012, had been passed into Honduran law. Torobin describes the "charter cities" as being placed on "unused land," a claim which must immediately be questioned. It can hardly be claimed that there is any "unused" land in Honduras, assuming the definition of "use" is broader than the Lockean claim that land is only "in use" if it is

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[772] Jeremy Torobin, "How 'Charter Cities' Could Lift the Global Economy," *The Globe and Mail*, September 12, 2012.
[773] Torobin, "Charter Cities."

being used to create profits.[774] Land is, instead, used for a variety of other purposes, whether as hunting and fishing territory, as ceremonial space, as a corridor that connects communities, and for countless other purposes. The existing proposals for "charter cities" in Honduras have mostly fallen on territory that is claimed by Indigenous and especially Garífuna communities, where the notion of "use" is far broader than that of the capitalist ideologues who seek to turn it into a corporate concession. As OFRANEH argues:

> Paul Romer's propaganda talks about building "Charter Cities" in uninhabited places. Unfortunately, in Honduras they are trying to dispossess the Garífuna people of half of our territory in order to create the RED (Special Development Region). The level of disinformation and violence that exists in this country reveals that multiple human rights violations will be caused by the establishment of a neocolonial project in the 21st century.[775]

If OFRANEH, the primary organization representing the people whose "unused" land would be used for a "charter city," considers it a neocolonial project, then this is surely a critique that needs to be taken seriously.

Indeed, Torobin's further claim that Canada should participate in establishing, through the "charter cities," a "rules-based" society like its own, brims with colonial

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[774] In Locke's most important theoretical work, his *Two Treatises on Government*, he lays out the intellectual cornerstones for the seizures and enclosures of land that were crucial to the emerging agrarian capitalism and colonialism. The key piece here is that Locke locates legitimate private ownership of land in the "use" of that land, where "use" is defined as extracting the highest possible profits from that land. As such, in examining the 17th century North American context, he notes the difference between "all the Profit an Indian can gain" from a piece of land in America and that which an English capitalist might derive, insisting that the more profitable English process gives the English capitalist the natural right to own that land. This argument lent itself perfectly to the colonial project in North America – since Indigenous practices could be claimed "wasteful" and seized to put to more profitable use – and is based on an understanding of "use" of land that is wholly rooted in capitalist exchange values. This logic has animated the process of "enclosing the commons" that has continued, more or less, since the establishment of capitalist social relations and which is evident in the case of the seizing of Garífuna territory for tourist and plantation operations and "charter cities." See John Locke, *Two Treatises on Government*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2005, p. 285-303. My argument here is drawn in part from Ellen Wood, *The Origin of Capitalism: A Longer View*, Verso, New York, 2002, p. 109-112.

[775] OFRANEH, quoted in Tim Russo, "Vallecito Resists, Satuye Lives! The Garifuna Resistance to Honduras' Charter Cities," *Upside Down World*, September 18, 2012.

arrogance and fails to grapple with the fact that Canada has been actively encouraging the impunity and lawlessness that presently govern Honduras.[776] In the meantime, he notably makes little effort to conceal the colonial nature of the "charter city" proposal, instead opting to defend the virtuous effects of previous colonial efforts. In the original McDonald-Laurier paper promoting the idea, Brandon Fuller and Paul Romer argue that "many [Chinese people] will acknowledge that, if they had a chance to replay history, they would gladly and voluntarily offer Hong Kong to the British."[777] This is a remarkable – and notably unsubstantiated – statement that suggests that colonized people would ultimately *choose* their colonization for all the supposed benefits it brings. While there is not space here to get into much detail, it is worth pausing on this argument, central to the rhetorical justification of the "charter city" proposal to which Canada has given its full support; consciously or not, this is an almost perfect contemporary replication of the "*mission civilisatrice*" justification of colonization that underpinned the tremendous expansion of direct colonialism in the late 19th century, not to mention the

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[776] It also demonstrates a remarkable blindness to the degree of impunity and lawlessness that manifests in Canada in a variety of spheres. Though it is outside the scope of this project to critically assess the Canadian justice system, there is widespread doubt that Canada provides any measure of equality or justice in its policing and political-legal system. Organizations and communities that would question the Canadian justice system include advocates for missing and murdered Indigenous women whose cases are rarely pursued, immigrant and migrant worker associations who are kept in vulnerable circumstances and, thus, excluded from access to social and legal institutions for fear of being deported, poor and racialized communities that are regularly subjected to police violence, Left and activist organizations that are targeted for police infiltration and selectively run through the time- and resource-consuming legal system on charges that rarely stick, victims of domestic and gender-based violence, and urban homeless and street-affected people who are routinely picked on for simply being impoverished, among countless others. Indeed, these and other spheres in which the Canadian justice system proves to be a far cry from its rhetorical ideal are often sites of struggle from Canadian social movements. As such, I offer here a list of activist organizations that have cropped up in response to each of the problems I highlighted above: on murdered Indigenous women, see "No More Silence," at http://nomoresilence-nomoresilence.blogspot.ca/ . On migrant workers issues, see "Justicia 4 Migrant Workers" at http://www.justicia4migrantworkers.org/ . On police targeting of activists, see "Movement Defence Committee," at http://movementdefence.org/ . On gender-based violence, see "Native Women's Association," at http://www.nwac.ca/ . On the criminalization of poverty, see "Ontario Coalition Against Poverty," at http://www.ocap.ca/ .

[777] Brandon Fuller and Paul Romer, "Success and the City: How Charter Cities Could Transform the Developing World," McDonald-Laurier Institute, Ottawa, April 2012.

justifications at the heart of the colonial project that brought Spain to Honduras in the first place.[778] As such, it is instructive to note that a central justification for one of Canada's great projects in Honduras echoes perfectly those of imperialisms of the past.

By the end of the piece, Torobin finally comes around to the really compelling motivation for the "charter cities" – the potential profits they could create. Given the

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[778] The "*mission civilisatrice*" was a central piece of the justification of French colonialism, and emerged as a rhetorical device in the great expansion of colonial empires in late 19th century. But the idea behind it – that colonial powers were actually providing a benevolent service to their occupied colonies by bringing "civilization" – dates back to the original 'discovery' and occupation of the Americas. It manifests differently across different moments, but central to this idea is the assumption that European civilizations were more advanced and enlightened and that the colonized would ultimately benefit from the imposition of a more developed social structure, a process Rudyard Kipling infamously declared "the white man's burden" (this would be extended to settler colonies like Canada, the United States, Australia, South Africa and Israel, insofar as they were culturally dominated by European settlers and their descendents). This dynamic can be traced through different generations of colonialism in Central America, as Chapters 3 and 4 demonstrated; the genocide in the Americas was justified, in part, by the claim that Indigenous people were "savage" or "barbaric," just as the imposition of U.S. manifest destiny in the 19th century was framed as a way for a benevolent big brother to help a smaller, weaker one "grow up." American intervention in the region from the 1950s to the 1980s was often justified as a project to save Central Americans from themselves, when they made "foolish" and "backwards" decisions to support social reform and revolution. Even the discourse of "international development" that emerged prominently in the 1990s is rooted in the idea that the metropolitan power is "ahead" and that it should take efforts to help poorer countries to "catch up." Practitioners of this version of International Development often express deep (and no doubt genuine) confusion when it appears that the communities they are trying to "develop" are not interested or refuse to do it the way that the developers expect. The response is to insist that "we are trying to help," and to assert that if these people would just listen to us, they would realise that these efforts are for their own good. In all of these "civilizing" doctrines, there is always, then, the assertion that the colonizers are providing a kind of painful medicine, "tough love" or "shock therapy;" people might resist them at first, out of backwardness, but that they will ultimately be thankful for the benevolent "helping hand." This is evident in Romer's justification of the "charter cities" and in his use of Hong Kong as an example. The claim that most Chinese people would be glad that Hong Kong was seized by the British is unsubstantiated and ahistorical; Hong Kong was occupied in order to guarantee a controlling British influence in the Opium trade, and marked a broader prying open of China to foreign concessioning that would last for nearly a century, culminating in fascist Japanese occupation in the 1930s and 40s. These dynamics were hotly contested at the time; British intervention in China was a major contributing factor in the largest peasant uprising against the Qing dynasty – the Taiping Rebellion – and the erosion of Chinese sovereignty and the catastrophic failures of governance that accompanied it – such as the great famine of the late 19th century – were among the grievances that ultimately led to the successful communist revolution in 1949. That Romer should use this as an example of a successful colonial intervention demonstrates a profound ignorance of the Chinese experience and it is clear that this ignorance extends to contemporary Honduras. On the "*mission civilisatrice*," see Robert J.C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*, Blackwell, Oxford, 2001. On U.S. "manifest destiny", see William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, New York, W.W. Norton & Co., 1972. On the Taiping Rebellion and the dismantling of Chinese sovereignty, see Jonathan D. Spence, *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xuiquan*, W.W. Norton and Co, New York, 2006. On the colonial roots of the Chinese famine, see Mike Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World*, Verso, New York, 2001. On Canada's adoption of the 'mission civilisatrice' in it's foreign policy, see Sherene H. Razack, "Canada's Afghan Detainee Torture Scandal," in Jerome Klassen and Greg Albo, ed., *Empire's Ally: Canada and the War in Afghanistan*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2013, p. 367-387.

exploitative and damaging record of Canadian companies in Honduras, there is every reason to think that the "charter cities" would operate in largely the same way. After all, the "charter cities" would not attract foreign investment if they were *less* profitable than investing in Honduras proper, and if the "charter cities" protected the rights of workers, communities, or the environment, the costs of doing business there would be driven up. Indeed, what seems much more likely is that the "charter cities" would be even more exploitative and would be even further insulated from the prospect of intervention by a social-democratic, reform-minded Honduran government. That is, enshrining a kind of hyper-neoliberalism in the legal architecture of a "charter city" and establishing its autonomy from the Honduran state could potentially serve to forestall the prospect of a resurgent social movement forcing a future Honduran government to move towards reform. This is, of course, a very real concern and a central piece of the current regime's campaign of terror and violence against the FNRP, which is presently organized and running campaigns for the 2013 elections.

The Globe and Mail's rhetoric around "doing good work," then, is rather unconvincing. What is clear is that Canada has supported the "charter city" idea wholeheartedly. In 2011, Canadian senator Gerry St. Germain was in Honduras promoting the idea, calling it "an historic moment" for the country.[779] In 2012, Ambassador Cameron Mackay followed up with a major effort to promote the FTA and the "charter cities," telling the Honduran media that there was some $25 million in new Canadian investment waiting to flow into Honduras when the conditions were right for it. Notably, he repeated often that Honduras needed to do a better job of maintaining peace

[779] Faustino Ordóñez, "Honduras, a la vanguardia en atracción de capital," *El Heraldo*, July 25, 2011.

and security; "without security, there can be no investment," he told *La Tribuna.*[780] Given the violence that Canada condoned against activists in the social movement, it seems clear that the security Mackay is referring to is that of private capital; indeed, Canada's increased involvement in the security apparatus in Honduras is a point to which I will return below.

Security in the "charter cities," of course, would be provided by the business interests that owned the concession and would, no doubt, look similar to the mercenary forces currently employed by local oligarchs and transnational companies, only with even less legal recourse for the Honduran state to temper their violence. This was a point that Jari Dixon, a former public prosecutor whom I quoted in Chapters 5 and 6, returned to repeatedly in an interview I conducted in 2012, shortly after the "charter city" laws were passed by the Honduran Congress. "This is a tragedy; even the narcotraffickers could start a charter city," he explained, referring to the fact that narco gangs and the oligarchy are intricately linked, and both are linked to foreign capital.

> The "charter city" laws remind me of William Walker in the 19th century; he landed at Trujillo with an army, declared himself president of Nicaragua, on behalf of the gringos, inviting in the Americans and the Canadians. It's a modern form of the same thing. But people haven't realized yet that this is what it means. It's already been passed into law. We're just waiting for the time that we won't be allowed to go to the beach, to use our own rivers, because we're not citizens of the "charter city" and it will be too late to struggle, because these people will be so protected. Look at how hard it has been for Argentina to take back the Maldives. Once those foreigners are installed here, it will be so hard to get rid of them, because their countries will protect them. The U.S. state, the Canadian state, they will protect the foreigners that arrive.[781]

[780] "Canadienses incentivan a la responsibilidad empresarial," *La Tribuna*, February 2, 2012.
[781] Interview with Jari Dixon, May 10, 2012.

Towards the end of our interview, Dixon offered a compelling picture of Honduras' ongoing colonization. Indeed, Dixon insists that there is a thread that connects William Walker's colonial adventure, to the banana companies, the mining companies, the occupation in the 1980s, and the coup and its aftermath; that thread, he insists, is imperialism. His analysis, which is shared by many in the social movement in Honduras, forms a key piece of the central thrust of this dissertation and, as such, I quote him here at length:

> This is a new colonization. There are so many people who see that we are being colonized. Foreigners are coming here to take advantage of our poverty and misery, and our country is perfect for them to exploit. People are told that this foreign investment will be good for us, that people can go work in the "charter city," that they will make money, that their lives will change, but it's a lie. We've heard it before. We had people who worked in the mines, who worked on the banana plantations, just to earn enough to eat. And the people never got pulled out of poverty. The banana companies – Standard, Cuyamel – they came in and bought up the presidents, the congress, the mayors. They ran this country in the 1930s, 40s, 50s. By the 1980s, the 90s, it was the *maquilas*, they were supposed to employ millions of Hondurans and bring people out of poverty, but now look at the women working there, they make less than the minimum wage.[782]

The "charter city" legislation was passed in the Honduran Congress in 2012, after just 10 days of discussion. Jari Dixon is part of a group of lawyers who have filed an injunction against the legislation, which they deem unconstitutional, but Congress has threatened to overrule any injunction brought against the "charter city" laws. As they presently stand, the laws allow for the creation of territorial concessions within Honduras that will have the following powers, as described by Honduran journalist Sandra Marybel Sánchez:

> 1. They will be autonomous, will be legally incorporated, will have their own administrative system, they will create their

[782] Interview with Jari Dixon, May 10, 2012.

own laws and they will have their own legal jurisdiction... composed of national or international experts.
2. They will be authorized to enter into international agreements and treaties related to trade and cooperation in matters within their competence.
3. They will be able to enter into agreements with national or international intelligence services to combat organized crime.
4. They will be authorized to have and operate their own police force, which may be strengthened by entering into bilateral agreements with other countries and regions.
5. The cities will have their own budget, to fix the taxes/rates they will charge and to collect and manage their own taxes.
6. They will be able to establish their own migration and immigration policies and rules, and control whatever transportation system admitted within its area of control/jurisdiction. Sea and air craft/vessels will have assured access to the city.
7. They will establish their own civil service and it is unclear what will be done with existing labour codes and statutes for teachers, doctors, etc.
8. They will establish their own policies and law governing migration and immigration, and will control any transportation system under the jurisdiction of the concession. Sea and aircraft will be assured access to the city and when it arrives, the city sets the rules, controls and fees being charged.[783]

In sum, they would have a "director" who would function as a president, following a separate set of legal, judicial, and tax codes, with their own free trade agreements, and arrangements with international financial institutions, and they will make their own immigration laws, all of which will be enforced by their own police and military.

CANADA AND (IN)SECURITY IN HONDURAS

Indeed, returning to the point about security, it is likely that the police and military for "charter cities" would be largely drawn from the same ranks that are

[783] Sandra Marybel Sánchez, "Ni una revolución, mucho menos una elección revertirá las "Ciudades Modelo" ¡Es ahora o nunca!," *Vos el Soberano*, August 8, 2012. Available at: http://voselsoberano.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=14076:ni-una-revolucion-mucho-menos-una-eleccion-revertira-las-ciudades-modelo-ies-ahora-o-nunca&catid=1:noticias-generales (Translated from Spanish. All translations by the author unless otherwise indicated.)

currently carrying out all manner of repression in Honduras. That security apparatus is a central component of Canada's imperial project in Honduras, insofar as it protects Canadian investments, as Cameron Mackay's comments above suggest. Canada has cultivated close relationships with the coup regime's key people regarding security. Luis Alberto Rubí, for instance, was invited to Ottawa to speak on a panel in 2011 organized by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) on "Confronting Crime and Impunity in Central America."[784] Ironic, indeed, that Rubí should speak on crime and impunity, given that he is Pepe Lobo's Attorney General and was a central figure in establishing the shifty legal architecture behind the coup. Indeed, cables unearthed by Wikileaks demonstrated that Rubí "was directly involved in the decision to remove Zelaya and used the legal apparatus under his control to stifle dissent and intimidate/persecute members of Zelaya's team."[785]

The point here, worth underlining, is that the security apparatus Canada is buttressing in Honduras is precisely the apparatus of anti-democratic state terror that Chapters 5 and 6 described in detail. In fact, that apparatus is so anti-democratic and corrupt that it cannot even be described as acting solely on behalf of the *golpistas*. In October 2012, the son of coup-supporter Julieta Castellanos, director of the *Universidad Nacional Autonómia de Honduras* (UNAH), was killed by police under mysterious circumstances.[786] The incident sparked a major controversy, especially given that Castellanos had actually been a supporter of the coup and participated in the Truth and

[784] Latin American and Caribbean Solidarity Network, "Harper Trades in Human Rights for Economic Concessions in Honduras," Press Release, August 9, 2011.
[785] Latin American and Caribbean Solidarity Network, "Harper Trades in Human Rights for Economic Concessions in Honduras," Press Release, August 9, 2011.
[786] Dana Frank, "Which Side is the U.S. On?" *The Nation*, June 11, 2012.

Reconciliation Commission that had served to absolve the regime for its overthrow of the President. The assassination of Castellanos' son highlighted the fact that while the Honduran police was carrying out political violence on behalf of the regime, it was also an integral part of the apparatus of organized crime in Honduras; that is, the police act with impunity, but their violence can fall in a variety of different directions depending on the money and personalities involved. As lawyer Nectali Rodezno explained in our interview:

> If you want to talk about cleaning up the police, you have to completely take the institution apart and rebuild it from the bottom up. It's incredible – a police officer who makes $2000 a month can have a house worth two or three million – where do they get this money from? I realize from being around the courts and the legal system in my work that they gain this money through extortion, through war taxes, and through protecting the criminals who charge such taxes.[787]

Indeed, over a two-hour interview, Rodezno discussed dozens of different cases and contexts that detailed the level of corruption, some of which I reproduced in Chapter 6, not least of which was the fact that the police themselves are charged with the process of investigating complaints of police corruption and violence. According to Rodezno, that corruption ranges from relatively minor, daily offenses right up to the very top-level connections between police, the state, and the narco gangs.[788] As Honduran social

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[787] Interview with Nectali Rodezno, May 4, 2012.

[788] A few brief examples include: 1) the pursuing and profiting from the ubiquitous "war taxes" that are charged by criminal gangs against people working in a variety of industries, like taxi-driving, as payment against the possibility of being targeted for violence; 2) the summary assassinations of people who run afoul of the criminal gangs, the state or the police itself, without investigations; 3) the selective protection of politicians from physical violence, for those politicians who resist attempts to reform the police, thus reproducing the existing levels of corruption; 4) the managing of the penal system such that new arrivals in Honduran jails go through a "diagnostics" department, run by police, that charges taxes on inmates to determine whose cases will be investigated and who will be given preferential treatment in the prison system; 5) direct links between police and criminal gangs that are exemplified in cases like that of the "disappearance" of hundreds of state-owned guns which, eventually, were discovered in the hands of narco gangs. These are only a handful of the cases that could be discussed. As Rodezno concluded in our

scientist Leticia Salomón insists, rule of law and democratic functioning in Honduras are, fundamentally broken.[789]

Of course, a complicated understanding of this dynamic has to acknowledge the fact that individual police officers who try to defy the corruption and violence of the institution are, themselves, systematically rooted out by that corrupt system. Alejandro Fernández explains this in an article for the Nicaraguan journal *Envío*:

> Will the current police purge do any good? Are there any good cops in our precincts? Dr. Ricardo says that several of his patients are police officers. He says their life is hell, because they're pressured by a chain of command that has made the institution into a public calamity. Those who don't want to stain their hands inevitably end up tainted by their peers' misdeeds or six feet under with their mouth sealed forever. At one time we watched the law of silence in mafia movies and now we see it multiplied tenfold in this small country where nobody is safe, not even the strongest or the richest.[790]

Julieta Castellanos was outspoken in her anger at the police for the assassination of her son and the outcry prompted the Lobo government to announce a Police Reform Commission – the "current purge" to which Fernández refers above – which would be charged with the task of determining how to reform the institution, which even Lobo acknowledged was riddled with corruption. The commission would feature five members and would be chaired by pre-eminent Honduran historian Victor Meza. I interviewed Meza at the offices of the *Centro de Documentación de Honduras* (CEDOH) and he expressed hope that the reform commission could turn things around. Nevertheless, even he could not deny that the deck was stacked against it: "once, I believed the police could

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interview, the corruption functions as a 'chain,' in which one sphere of corruption feeds into another chain, such that the entire system is dysfunctional. Interview with Nectali Rodezno, May 4, 2012.

[789] Leticia Salomón, "Golpe de estado, clase política y proceso electoral," *LASA Forum*, Volume XLI, Issue 1, Winter 2010.

[790] Alejandro Fernández, "A Sad Christmas Ballad," *Envío,* No. 378, January 2013.

help solve the problem. Soon, I realized they were part of the problem. Now I see that they are the problem."[791] Indeed, while Meza was careful in our interview to be measured in his comments – no doubt aware of the potential ramifications for him should he veer too far from the accepted line of the Lobo government – he had to acknowledge that the commission was likely to receive all manner of intimidation and violence should it seek to significantly alter the dynamics in the Honduran police: "I recognize the difficulty. A journalist was recently kidnapped twenty meters from this office."[792]

The prospects, then, for the commission to "clean up" the Honduran police seem dim. A more likely scenario, however, would see the commission propose measures to "professionalize" the police and orient them more effectively towards the protection and security of private property. It is notable that, of the five people on the commission, one was to be Chilean and one Canadian.[793] Canada and Chile are the number one and two foreign investors in Honduran mining, and Victor Meza had to admit that:

> The Canadians surely support their own interests here, especially in natural resources. One of our CEDOH studies showed that 52% of violent conflicts in Honduras are associated with natural resource extraction.[794]

Sure enough, in May 2012, Canada named Adam Blackwell to the police commission; Blackwell, a current Canadian representative at the OAS where Canada pushed hard to have Honduras re-instated after the coup, is a former ambassador to the Dominican Republic, where he was outspoken in his support for mining legislation that favoured

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[791] Interview with Victor Meza, May 10, 2012.
[792] Interview with Victor Meza, May 10, 2012.
[793] The Chilean government named Aquiles Blu Rodriguez, a General in the national police who retired shortly after being implicated in a massive drug-trafficking coverup, to the Honduran commission. Even members of the Honduran Congress have raised questions about having such a figure on a police reform commission.
[794] Interview with Victor Meza, May 10, 2012.

Canadian companies.[795] In fact, Blackwell's public statements in the Dominican Republic in the early 2000s are eerily reminiscent of those recently made by Cameron Mackay in Honduras, as reproduced above. In 2003, he pressured the Dominican government to accept new proposals for mining legislation; the Dominican newspaper *El Caribe* reported that Blackwell was insisting that "certain changes in the mining laws [were] required to entice serious investments in this area."[796] Blackwell also noted that Placer Dome, a massive Vancouver-based mining consortium, was holding back on $300 million in investment until the new mining laws were passed. A few months later, Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chrétien visited the country and celebrated the passing of the new mining code. A year later, Canadian private capital controlled some 90% of Dominican mining, much of which had previously been state-run.[797]

Given 1) the common theme in Canada's public statements in 2012 about the necessity for stronger guarantees of security in Honduras in order to protect its investments; 2) the social conflict that has emerged around all of the major sites of Canadian enterprises in the country; and 3) the appointment of a commissioner with a history of pursuing precisely those goals in another country, it seems a rather predictable conclusion that the Canadian interest in the reform commission will be to try to orient its direction in favour of a police force that would serve the interests of Canadian capital. This appears to be the course that Canada will chart, despite the fact that those interests continue to be in contradiction with the extension of human security and social justice for Hondurans affected by those enterprises.

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[795] Karen Spring and Sandra Cuffe, "Canada and Chile Meddling in Honduras' Economic and Security Policies," *Upside Down World*, May 21, 2012.
[796] Karen Spring and Sandra Cuffe, "Canada and Chile..."
[797] Karen Spring and Sandra Cuffe, "Canada and Chile..."

This is a troubling prospect, given the dynamics I have described over the previous three chapters. It is emblematic of the shift in Canadian state priorities that it has found an ideal partner, in business and politics, in one of the most violent regimes in the western hemisphere, in one of its poorest countries. Evidently, it has also found a military partner in that regime; in August 2011, the Honduran Congress approved a proposal for joint exercises in Honduras with the Canadian Armed Forces.[798] The Harper government denied that Canada was planning to send troops to Honduras but, later that month, an Edmonton magazine reported that troops in Alberta were being given Spanish-language training as part of their preparation for deployments in Latin America. The report is worth quoting at length, given the Harper government's denial of plans to send troops to Honduras:

> The [training] program uses film industry professionals to create realistic villages and towns to help soldiers get a feel for what it will be like to work in non-English speaking countries. According to those planning these exercises they have now put away the Afghan flavour villages in favour of Spanish-speaking set-ups. But it is not for entertainment.
>
> "It just adds a more robust training to fully prepare the soldiers before they deploy," one of the exercise planners, Major Stu Smoley, said. "It's training formed units. It has nothing to do with recruit training. It has nothing to do with recruiting. It has everything to do with preparing soldiers for when they go off on operations."
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> Although the military deny they have plans to deploy they do say, "Exercises conducted by CMTC (Canadian Manoeuvre Training Centre) are generic in nature, but specific enough to be

[798] Steve Rennie, "PM dismisses rights concerns as he touts trade pact with Honduras," The Canadian Press, August 12, 2011. Available at: http://www.ipolitics.ca/2011/08/12/human-rights-concerns-cloud-harpers-honduras-trade-talks/

> tailored to whatever the Canadian Forces expect to encounter when deployed."[799]

It was not a stretch, then, to suggest that Honduras would be among the places Canada was training its soldiers for deployment, despite Ottawa's denial, especially given that the Harper government has become increasingly secretive about its foreign deployments.[800]

In fact, rumours swirled through the Honduran social movements in late 2011 that Canadian troops were already on the ground there. Sure enough, though it is unclear when they arrived, by mid-2012 Canadian soldiers had their boots on the ground as part of an international military medical force. Reports from "Operation Beyond the Horizon" suggested that it was a humanitarian aid project, but it is, nevertheless, noteworthy in the contemporary Honduran context that Canadian soldiers are establishing their more permanent presence, especially given that Canadian troops have already been running training exercises and participating in counter-narcotics operations, a point to which I will return.[801] Significantly, Lieutenant-Commander Debbie Pestell told the media that delivering medical support was actually only the *secondary* goal of "Beyond the Horizon," the first being:

> To work together as nations so that if we ever have to quickly deploy together we've already had that experience with

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[799] Chandra Lye, "Canadian Forces to undergo Spanish language training in Alberta," *YegNews*, August 29, 2011. Available at: http://www.yegnews.com/2011-08-29-canadian-forces-spanish-language-training-alberta-1425/

[800] In fact, the Harper government has been sarcastically awarded the "Code of Silence" award from the Canadian Association of Journalists (CAJ) several years in a row, dating as far back as 2007. In the press release announcing the award in 2012, CAJ President Hugo Rodrigues claimed that "the death grip on information has long frustrated journalists in this country, but it may now be reaching a point where the public at large is not only empathetic, but shares it." That CAJ offers such a stern critique is noteworthy, given the extent to which the Canadian mainstream media can usually be counted upon to, more or less, fundamentally support the structures of class power and privilege in Canada. Please see Canadian Association of Journalists, "Harper government wins Code of Silence Award, again," Press Release, April 28, 2012. Available at: http://www.caj.ca/?p=2657

[801] Interview with Felix Molina, May 2, 2012.

> interoperability and logistics and tactics and time and getting everybody spooled up and working together.[802]

That Canadian troops have a primary goal of preparing for quick joint deployment with the Honduran military that overthrew a democratically-elected president in 2009 – and has more or less ruled Honduras ever since – is indicative of the extent to which the promotion of democracy is not a Canadian priority.

These links are not entirely new; Canada has been training military personnel in Honduras and elsewhere throughout the 2000s.[803] Indeed, many of the perpetrators of the 2009 coup are graduates of U.S. and Canadian training programs, and in 2011 Canada was organizing comprehensive workshops on military-police cooperation through the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre.[804] Nevertheless, active participation in military operations in Honduras represents an escalation of its prior engagements. The Canadian military participated in a major counter-narcotics campaign called "Operation Martillo" in mid-2012, organized by the U.S. and carried out across Central America and especially in Guatemala and Honduras; it was deemed a "complete success" despite the fact that a U.S. helicopter was implicated in the murder of four Honduran civilians in La Moskitia.[805] What is more, while Harper was in Honduras to sign the FTA in 2011, he pledged $9.2 million in undisclosed support for security plans in the country.[806] That is, Canada is

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[802] Debbie Pestell, quoted in "International Forces train with and assist Hondurans during Beyond the Horizon 2012," video posted online by "armysouthPreview," May 10, 2012. Available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3PqjvyFjUYA

[803] Gordon, *Imperialist Canada*, p. 312.

[804] Emma Feltes, "Laboratory, Honduras," *The Dominion*, June 8, 2012. This is a rather ironic development given that the Honduran military and police have essentially functioned as different branches of the same organization since the coup and, arguably, the collusion between the military and police has contributed to the overall degree of terror and impunity that has reigned in Honduras since 2009.

[805] Adam Williams, "Operation Martillo Deemed a "Complete Success" in Guatemala, Honduras," *Dialogo*, July 23, 2012.

[806] "Canada and Honduras sign free trade pact," AFP, August 12, 2011. Available at: http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5h2amSz9V97yfb9ZskxzzFgvQj1Ow?docId=CNG.5abd991586b6d2b107b52196f47587cc.31

now actively collaborating with *and* financing the architecture of repression described in Chapters 5 and 6; the significance of this cannot be overstated, as it suggests that Canada's support for the coup regime is actually expanding from tacit political support, to overt diplomatic work, to direct technical and material assistance.

It is worth pausing to remember that Canada is not alone in this project. As elaborated in Chapter 2, Canadian imperialism -- in Honduras and elsewhere – is distinct from U.S. imperialism but deeply linked up with it. The increasing presence of Canadian troops in Honduras, for instance, is taking place alongside a growing U.S. military presence as well.[807] Though it is beyond the scope of this project to detail the ongoing U.S. involvement in Honduras, it is worth drawing out a few points here. As noted above, in May 2012, the U.S. deployment in Honduras was directly involved in a massacre of four Indigenous people in the jungle region of La Moskitia. Many months of tireless investigations by community organizations in Honduras – and North American allies – were able to piece together a relatively clear picture of events. A definitive report by Greg McCain described it thus:

> On May 11th on the Rio Patuca near Ahuas, a small municipality in the Moskitia, a helicopter titled to the US State Department sprayed bullets into a *pipante*, a long, narrow dugout canoe, which carried sixteen locals. Four people were killed: 28-year-old Juana Jackson (six months pregnant), 48-year-old Candelaria Pratt Nelson (five months pregnant), 14-year-old Hasked Brooks Wood, and 21-year-old Emerson Martínez Henríquez. At least four more were seriously injured. The DEA confirms that its Foreign-deployed Advisory Support Team (FAST) participated in the operation supporting a Honduran National Police Tactical Response Team.[808]

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[807] The United States has, more or less, played a similar role in post-coup Honduras to that played by Canada, though with rather less vigour. Greg Grandin, "Honduras, Obama and the Region's New Right," *LASA Forum*, Volume XLI, Issue 1, Winter 2010.

[808] Greg McCain, "The DEA and the Return of the Death Squads," *Counterpunch*, June 15, 2012.

That the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) should be directly involved in a civilian massacre is a rather predictable consequence of its ongoing partnership with the Honduran military that has been committing such offences with regularity since 2009. But it is a further reminder of what Canada is plugging itself into, as it enters into joint military projects with the U.S. and Honduras.

The incident took place under the auspices of "counter-narcotics" operations, which, ironically, had been celebrated in a series of major articles in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, just a few weeks before the massacre. Thom Shanker's piece in the *New York Times* noted that the U.S. had established three new operating bases in Honduras and described what he called "the nation's new way of war," with "small-footprint" missions that are designed out of the counter-insurgency tactics used in Iraq and Afghanistan.[809] Shanker added that "American troops [in Honduras] cannot fire except in self-defence, and they are barred from responding with force even if Honduran or DEA agents are in danger," a regulation that was evidently broken just a few weeks later.[810] This incident is worth highlighting because it further demonstrates that the impunity with which Honduran military and police operate extends to the foreign militaries working with them. U.S. and Canadian troops, then, cannot be counted upon to follow even the limited degree of restraint imposed by the terms of their agreements with the Honduran military. This is a rather worrying fact, given the legacy of U.S. military occupation in the 1980s. And, since no one from the DEA faced any reprisal for the massacre in La Moskitia, it is rather difficult to deny that foreign forces in Honduras act with impunity, which does not bode well for the social movements who are seeking to

[809] Thom Shanker, "U.S. turns its focus on drug smuggling in Honduras," *The New York Times*, May 5, 2012.
[810] Shanker, "U.S. turns its focus..."

defend themselves against the further parcelling out and selling off of their land and resources.

The increased North American military presence – and the impunity that continues to reign in Honduras – is just one piece of the project to impose a hyper-neoliberalism on that country to facilitate further profitable investment or, put differently, to secure more easily exploitable Honduran resources and labour. Indeed, as Annie Bird argued in our interview:

> the claim is that the emerging regional security apparatus is being built for the war against drug trafficking. The reality is that its strongest partners are not 'failed' states but those run by drug trafficking networks, where the people in power are almost indistinguishable from the narco gangs.[811]

Indeed, Bird locates Honduras' increasing militarization in the context of the deeper re-militarization of the entire region, particularly as part of the regional security partnership, *Sistema de la Integración Centroamericana* (SICA),[812] which is widely considered to be driven by the interests of powers outside of the actual alliance – primarily the United States, Canada, and Colombia – which increasingly cooperate with the Honduran regime. "Nicaragua is not considered a partner in the drug war," Bird argues, "despite having recorded the highest number of actual drug hits. So, in fact, the real war here is against those who are resisting global capital and it's neoliberal projects."[813] Bird describes the broader regional security apparatus, as it is being applied in Honduras, modelled after the Colombian example:

> The Colombian model being promoted through SICA draws heavily on two elements: one is surveillance technology, the

[811] Interview with Annie Bird, May 10, 2012.
[812] Not to be confused with the *Secretaría de Integración Económica Centroamericana* (SIECA) which is a regional organization established to facilitate economic integration across Central America.
[813] Interview with Annie Bird, May 10, 2012.

> other is so-called neighbourhood informants, they were known in Guatemala as "military commissioners," people who essentially spy on the community and then inform the military about who are the criminal elements... they produce these lists of people to be arrested, and not even necessarily those who actually commit any crimes, but rather those who are leaders of the social movement.[814]

Bird's analysis is compelling because it links the Honduran case into the broader regional dynamics. While this dissertation cannot possibly address the entire spectrum of regional problems, it is worth briefly situating Honduras in these dynamics. Drawing her analysis from the well-documented "Plan Puebla Panama" preparations, Bird argues that transnational capital and its state-level representatives had, broadly speaking, a three-pronged strategy for the deep imposition of neoliberalism in Central America, following the end of the regional wars of the 1980s. Those three prongs, according to Bird, were: first, the legal architecture for the re-entry of capital after the wars, as manifest in the restructuring of the respective states, the signing of CAFTA and bilateral FTAs, and the gradual re-writing of legal codes around natural resources, public services, and other potentially profitable industries. Second, the construction of the physical infrastructure – from a series of new highways, railroads and seaports to hydro dams, electrical integration and transmission lines – for the effective development of new production, shipping, and distribution centres.[815] Finally, the establishment of a reliable security

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[814] Interview with Annie Bird, May 10, 2012.

[815] The details of these projects are painstakingly laid out, in great detail, by Nieves Capote in *La Dictadura del Capital, No.2: Del P.P.P. al Projecto Mesoamérica*, Otros Mundos A.C., San Cristóbal de las Casas, Mexico, 2010. Much of this infrastructure is in the process of being constructed, often by North American-based firms benefiting from subsidies from North American development agencies like CIDA and from host governments. Among the many developments that touch Honduras are the major inter-American highways – the *Corredor del Pacífico* and the *Corredor del Atlántico* – designed to bypass the busy *Carretera Panamericana*, as well as a series of highways cutting across the isthmus and the *Corredor Turístico*, which connects the Gulf Coast tourist destinations from Cancún to Trujillo. The Honduran sections of the highway, from Puerto Barrios to Trujillo, was concessioned to the company *Autopistas del Atlántico* for 30 years, in December 2012. The company is based in Spain but its majority shareholder is

apparatus to protect businesses looking to take advantage of the new conditions and profitably exploit their concessions.[816] This final element of the broad strategy is, according to Bird, only now beginning to fall into place, and the coup and the project to establish and support a compliant – and necessarily repressive – security apparatus in Honduras is a key element of that regional plan.[817]

Indeed, given all of this, it appears profoundly significant that Canadian investment in Honduras, and Canadian cooperation with the Honduran government, have been dramatically *increased* since the military coup in 2009. That is, there is a direct correlation between state violence and the intensification of neoliberalism, on the one side, and Canadian participation in Honduras on the other. The coup was not incidental to Canadian investment in Honduras; rather, it spurred it forward. Bilateral trade between the two countries increased by 9.3% from 2009-2010, and it jumped over 22% in

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the U.S. commercial and investment bank, Citigroup. "Gobierno concesiona por 30 años el corredor turístico de Honduras," *La Prensa*, December 12, 2012. Capote's analysis of the P.P.P. also details the construction of an inter-connected electrical system across Central America through the *Sistema de Interconexión Eléctrica* (SIEPAC) and the hundreds of hydroelectric dams and power stations being built across the region – some 40 major hydroelectric facilities and over 50 microgeneration plants in Honduras – concessioned to private companies but massively subsidized.

[816] Interview with Annie Bird, May 10, 2012.

[817] Bird's analysis here is compelling, but it is by no means the whole story. Alexander Segovia's excellent three-part assessment of regional integration in Central America, for instance, complicates the picture by highlighting a significant shift in the regional power dynamics away from the old oligarchies connected to agroexport and towards the new transnational capitalist classes rooted in non-traditional sectors like *maquiladoras*, tourism, and the service industries. Indeed, his 2007 assessment was prophetic insofar as it was a conflict between the old and new oligarchies that animated much of Manuel Zelaya's presidency and, arguably, helped pave the way for the right wing coup in 2009. Significant in Segovia's account – and this is an important element to insert into Bird's argument – is that the emerging elite in Central America have not simply plugged into North American plans, but have in fact led a process of regional integration for their own purposes. The growth of the *maquiladora* industry and the dramatic rise in migration to the North America – and the dollar-denominated remittances sent back to Central America – created the conditions for rising consumption by local elite. As such, regional markets have become more significant in the strategic planning of the new Central American elite, and the broader neoliberal plans that North American capital has made for the region (as described by Bird) have found willing partners in the Central American business councils and chambers of commerce, which use the increasingly integrated regional architecture to its own advantage. As such, Segovia's analysis offers a useful reminder that the existence of predatory and imperialistic foreign powers does not preclude the possibility of local agents participating, benefiting or even taking a lead role in establishing the apparatus that facilitates those imperial projects. See Alexander Segovia, "The Concentration of Power: More Integration and Inequality," *Envío*, No. 307, February 2007.

2011.[818] This very clearly suggests that Canada's support for the coup regime is connected to its direct economic interests in Honduras and its broader political economic interests in the Central American isthmus. Canada's participation in the interruption of both the liberal democratic political system and, more importantly, the broad-based social movement in Honduras in order to promote those political economic interests, fits perfectly the definition I have offered of imperialism. Indeed, the assertion that Canada is behaving as an imperial power in Honduras comes first and foremost from Hondurans themselves. Jari Dixon's compelling sketch of a Honduras being re-colonized by Canadian capital should be as clear an indication as any that Canada can no longer hide behind the mythology of its peacekeeping past; the peaceful, democratic social movement in Honduras, like so many in the Global South today, names Canada directly as its enemy.[819] There is perhaps nothing that could validate the central argument of this dissertation more than this simple and stubborn fact.

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[818] Government of Canada, "Canada-Honduras Relations," February 2013. Available at: http://www.canadainternational.gc.ca/costa_rica/bilateral_relations_bilaterales/canada_honduras.aspx?view=d

[819] Honduran historian Rodolfo Pastor Fasquelle reports, for instance, that the coup and its aftermath provoked discussion of the creation of a new Latin American Community of Nations that would include Cuba but exclude the United States and Canada. Canada's status as a pariah would come as a great shock to the 'Middle Power' enthusiasts who, in the 1960s and 70s, imagined that Canada could mediate between U.S. imperialism and Latin American development. Rodolfo Pastor Fasquelle, "The 2009 Coup and the Struggle for Democracy in Honduras," *NACLA Report on the Americas*, Vol. 44, No. 1, January/February 2011, p. 16-21.

CHAPTER EIGHT – CONCLUSIONS

The preceding analysis has demonstrated that Canada's deeper imperial engagement in the world has come at great cost for the victims of the new Canadian project. The emphasis that this dissertation has placed on Honduras served to demonstrate that, even in Canada's less direct imperial campaigns, the consequences of Canada's behaviour are deeply troubling and represent a rupture from anything resembling its rhetorical mobilization of peace, freedom, democracy or human security. What is more, they represent a significant escalation of Canada's efforts to seize upon the advantages of the global capitalist world order and, indeed, to play an ever greater role in shaping and perpetuating that order. Far from being a "middle power," a neutral or sensible arbiter of relations between imperial powers and peripheral states, Canada has emerged as a secondary component in the U.S.-led empire of capital, with a ruling class that is coherent and organized and that has fully signed on to its role in international class struggle.

In drawing these conclusions, of course, it is necessary to recall that the "Canada" described throughout this dissertation is not a monolithic, unified body. In the first place, the above analysis uses "Canada" to refer to Canadian government and state institutions and the interests they represent. That is, the Canada that is projected into the world is a construction that is driven by the complex interaction between political parties, institutional bureaucracies and policy-makers, and the vast array of private interests that intervene to push policy in particular directions. Those private interests, as I demonstrate in Chapter 2, have increasingly come to occupy a central role in the generation of Canadian policy. Nothing in this analysis implies that every individual politician, policy-maker, lobbyist or, indeed, Canadian citizen is personally and self-consciously committed

to the politics of imperialism that I have attributed to Canada; political parties, state institutions, and civil society at large are all spaces of intense internal contestation. There are, indeed, countless individuals within nearly every category of Canadian society that may object, vocally and materially, to the new Canadian imperialism. What is significant, and what this dissertation has contributed to demonstrating, is that those voices have become outnumbered and outvoted, and that they are increasingly being circumvented by new structures of political decision-making.

Canada, then, is increasingly represented by those who would have it behave as an imperial power for the benefit of a small network of wealthy Canadians. Indeed, what should be most alarming is that the analysis provided in this dissertation details only one example of the new Canadian imperialism. While Honduras, the central case study I have used, has taken on greater significance for Canada since the opening that the 2009 coup provided, it remains a relatively minor component of Canada's broader imperial agenda. While Canada is Honduras' second largest foreign investor, that country represents only a fraction of total Canadian investment; the Latin American region as a whole received some $27.9 billion in 2007, still representing only 20% of all Canadian FDI, with the highest amounts going to Argentina, Brazil, Mexico and Chile.[820] Honduras, in fact, receives as little as 0.1% of Canadian investment, and the patterns of support that the Canadian state provides to its capital in Honduras are replicated – with adaptations for the particular dynamics in different countries and regions – in most of the places where Canadian capital has gone. Todd Gordon's work in *Imperialist Canada* and elsewhere has provided a useful overview of the full sweep of Canadian FDI and the

[820] Todd Gordon, "Positioning Itself in the Andes: Critical Reflections on Canada's Relations with Colombia," *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* Vol. 35, No. 70, 2011, p. 56-57.

imperial politics that follow it, from Africa to the Andes, and if one were to bring these cases in, the violence and injustice that permeate this dissertation would be magnified exponentially.

This dissertation has used the case of Honduras to demonstrate one piece of what is a broader trend. In conclusion, then, it is worth briefly broadening the scope of this analysis, in order to contextualize the study of Canada and Honduras and to demonstrate the extent to which it is, in fact, emblematic of the wider shift in Canadian politics. To be sure, Canada's participation in the occupation of Afghanistan has to be considered one of the most significant imperial adventures in Canadian history and the degree of human suffering that it has provoked is almost impossible to calculate. The occupation, ongoing for over 12 years now, has left that country devastated, left thousands of civilians killed and left some 70% of surviving Afghans living in poverty under the NATO-approved Afghan government, which has notably re-introduced the most conservative social policies the war was ostensibly fought to eliminate, including laws that allow husbands to rape their wives.[821] Far from rebuilding Afghanistan, Canada has helped oversee the neoliberal dismantling of a state that achieved some economic growth and social equality in the 1970s and 80s. Indeed, prior to U.S. fomenting of a proxy war with the Soviet Union in the 1980s, the non-Soviet Marxist-inspired leadership of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan had instituted a complicated reform program that included redistribution of land, sweeping new measures for gender equality, and a comprehensive education and literacy program for Afghans of all ages and genders.[822]

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[821] Jerome Klassen, "Methods of Empire," in Jerome Klassen and Greg Albo, ed., *Empire's Ally: Canada and the War in Afghanistan*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2013, p. 151.
[822] John W. Warnock, "Afghanistan and Empire," in Jerome Klassen and Greg Albo, ed., *Empire's Ally: Canada and the War in Afghanistan*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2013, p. 56-57.

Much of that work was undone in the civil wars that followed U.S. and Soviet intervention, and what remained was totally undermined by the 2001 NATO invasion and occupation. After dropping billions of tons of bombs and reducing Afghan infrastructure to rubble, Canadian aid for reconstruction has been paltry and directly tied to the military occupation itself, as part of campaigns to win the "hearts and minds" of Afghans. What is more, much of the money that Canada has spent on Afghanistan has gone directly to Canadian companies operating in the new neoliberal framework that the puppet Karzai government has pushed through; at least 50% of reconstruction money gets recycled right back into Canadian corporate profits and salaries.[823] Not surprisingly, the extreme violence of the occupation has actually filled the ranks of the Taliban and other armed resistance groups who, quite reasonably, do not consider the foreign presence benevolent; Canada, for instance, is directly implicated in the torture of civilian detainees who are stripped, beaten, frozen, electrocuted, deprived of sleep, sexually assaulted and humiliated, attacked with dogs and often ultimately killed.[824]

This is drawn out in Sherene Razack's crucial contribution to *Empire's Ally*, in which she foregrounds the deep colonial logic and nature of the occupation, exploring the significance of Canada's involvement in the torture of Afghan detainees and connecting it to the 1993 torture scandal in Somalia. Razack refuses to accept the instrumentalization of torture, eschewing the idea that Canadian soldiers submitted their victims to torture simply to gain military information; rather, she insists that the violence of the torture act is designed to mark the colonized body with its "savage" status. The message, Razack argues, is that the "civilized" world of the colonizer is considered important enough to

[823] Klassen, *Empire's Ally*, p. 161.
[824] Klassen, *Empire's Ally*, p. 167.

justify destroying "uncivilized" bodies in order to protect it, even when the intervention is rhetorically premised on humanitarian aims:

> The West understands peacekeeping and humanitarian interventions as an encounter in which "civilized" nations confront the savagery of cultures and peoples that have not yet entered modernity... Canadian soldiers imagined themselves as disciplining and keeping in line, through practices of violence, uncivilized Somalis whose resentment and anger at western peacekeepers who had come to save them they could not comprehend.[825]

In the case of Somalia in 1993, the actions of Canadian torturers were more or less forgiven in the Canadian public as acts driven by heat exhaustion, poor leadership, and the ungratefulness of those they had gone to protect. This suggests, argues Razack, "a nation that ultimately remembers the torture as a moment of its own kindness and superiority," which partially explains the underwhelming response in the Canadian public to accounts of torture in Afghanistan and other acts of violence by the Canadian military abroad.[826]

To be sure, the experience of Honduras over the past four years suggests that torture cannot be explained simply in terms of Western "civilizing missions," since, put simply, Hondurans have been torturing Hondurans. Nevertheless, Razack's argument may still resonate in that context, if one considers the collusion between the Honduran military – which describes its project as "modernizing" even while it tortures its own people – and the Canadian state, which has endeavoured to facilitate and legitimate the regime committing such violent acts. As this dissertation demonstrated, the Canadian state has had to work hard to ignore the widespread reports of repressive – sometimes

[825] Sherene Razack, "From the Somalia Affair to Canada's Afghan Detainee Torture Scandal: How Stories of Torture Define the Nation," in Jerome Klassen and Greg Albo, ed., *Empire's Ally: Canada and the War in Afghanistan*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2013, p. 378-379.
[826] Razack, *Empire's Ally*, p. 380.

shocking and brutal – violence in Honduras since the 2009 coup. As the authors in *Empire's Ally* have painstakingly shown, the Canadian state has similarly accepted torture as part of the "mission" in Afghanistan. Whatever contestation may be taking place within the Canadian state, it is clear that the pro-torture position has the upper hand; a fact that, itself, speaks volumes. What is more, returning briefly to Razack's point, the extent to which the broader Canadian public has accepted torture as part of the toolkit of imperial benevolence is, itself, a striking demonstration of a colonial frame of mind. No less striking is the openness with which that mindset is proclaimed, as when a right wing columnist asserted in a major newspaper in 2001 that "what the Afghans need is colonizing."[827]

Afghanistan, then, is just one more case study that would have to be included in any complete picture of the new Canadian imperialism. Like the great empires it is mimicking, Canadian imperial politics cannot be contained in one or two volumes; what is required is a wholesale intellectual engagement in the disciplines of Canadian Politics, Canadian Studies, Canadian Political Economy and Canadian Foreign Policy with the fact of Canadian imperialism, such that case studies like this one on Honduras can be linked up and connected with similar studies on Canada's relationships in Afghanistan, in Colombia, in Mexico, in Israel and occupied Palestine, in Chad and elsewhere. That work is underway, of course; *Empire's Ally*, much cited in this dissertation, has provided the best comprehensive analysis of Canadian imperialism in Afghanistan yet, and Justin Podur's *Haiti's New Dictatorship* is among the efforts at building this analysis in Haiti, though its emphasis is not necessarily on Canada, as much as the United Nations mission

[827] Mark Steyn, "What the Afghans need is colonizing," *National Post*, October 9, 2001.

of which Canada is a key component.[828] Todd Gordon's above-noted *Imperialist Canada* has attempted to bring some of these cases together, and other scholars have sought to sketch out scattered pieces of this problem. Nevertheless, this project is in its infancy and much more work is required; it is my humble hope that this dissertation can provide a kind of template for future work that could be done to re-examine Canadian foreign policy elsewhere in light of a thorough and complicated understanding of the new Canadian imperialism and the political economic dynamics by which it is animated.

Indeed, in conclusion, it is the urgency of this project that I wish to highlight. The changes inherent in the Canadian state's decision to seize its opportunity for a greater imperial role are affecting a dramatic and wholesale shift in Canada's perception in the world and – even more troubling – in Canadians' perception of the world. As the postcolonial theoretical tradition has so effectively demonstrated, imperialism, being so profoundly in contradiction with the values most associated with social justice, requires a variety of delusions and deceptions to be made palatable to people who might otherwise recoil at its naked assertion of the power of one over another. Colonizers seek to convince themselves – and sometimes those they are colonizing – that their colonization is necessary, benevolent, well intentioned or otherwise just.[829] Imperialist powers, then, typically project narratives about themselves that justify their actions and, as Canada has

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[828] Justin Podur, *Haiti's New Dictatorship*, Toronto, Between the Lines, 2012.

[829] An evocative illustration of this project can be found in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, in which the primary narrator, like Conrad himself, struggles with his own ambiguous position with respect to the colonial 'idea.' As the narrator famously remarks: "the conquest of the Earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a slightly different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea only. An idea at the back of it; not a sentimental pretence but an idea; and an unselfish belief in the idea – something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to." Conrad struggles to understand how a belief in progress and human development can be expressed by the violent subjugation of one people by another, and this is the intellectual and spiritual problem that will increasingly face Canadians as the reality of Canadian imperialism becomes increasingly difficult to deny. Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, New York, W.W. Norton & Co., 1988.

delved deeper and deeper into imperial politics, Canadian culture has increasingly produced the ideological material necessary to justify it.[830]

There may be no better example of this than the winner of the 2008 Governor General's Literary Award, *National Post* columnist Christie Blatchford, who is a key figure in the new Canadian right and whose award-winning *Fifteen Days* represents perhaps the most straightforward – and offensive – justifications of the new Canadian imperialism. Blatchford's book, written as a series of vignettes of her experiences embedded with the Canadian military in Afghanistan, opens with a quotation drawn from one of the great cheerleaders of classical imperialism, Rudyard Kipling, and the first line of the first chapter reads, "by July 2006, Task Force Orion was a killing machine."[831] Blatchford is signalling from the get-go that she is not interested in denying Canadian imperialism, as some liberal and left-nationalist observers might; she is seeking to celebrate it.

A few pages later, Blatchford narrates a scene between a Canadian solider and an Afghan, wherein the Canadian stumbles upon a wounded Afghan and decides to take him in for medical support, but not before asserting Canadian superiority:

> "Willy had to calm me down because I was pissed," he says... [To the wounded Afghan,] "if I was under the bush there, bleeding, and you came across me, what would you do to me?' And he said, 'Oh I'd take you back to my compound and heal

[830] The long history of post-facto construction of imperial justifications has been touched on in a few different forms across this dissertation. It is worth adding, here, the recognition that the process of constructing those justifications does psychological violence: to the colonized, of course, insofar as it writes narratives that denigrate or completely erase them from the history of human development, but also to the colonizers, who are encouraged to develop an obviously false consciousness – a necessarily self-deceiving narrative – of the world in which they live. This point is made eloquently by Frantz Fanon and Jean-Paul Sartre, among others, in the context of French colonialism in Algeria. See Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reasoning: Theory of Practical Ensembles, Vol. I*, London, Verso, 1976. See also Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, New York, Grove Press, 2004.

[831] Christie Blatchford, *Fifteen Days: Stories of Bravery, Friendship, Life and Death from Inside the Canadian Military*, Toronto, Anchor Canada, 2008, p. 2.

> you up,' and I said, 'that's bullshit... That's bullshit. *Because I'm better than you, because we're better than you*, I will heal you up and patch you up and take you back.'"[832]

In Blatchford's tale, the Canadian military is in Afghanistan because Afghanistan needs an imperial power. Afghans need people who are *better*, to show them how to themselves be better. The extent of Blatchford's colonial arrogance is matched only by the soldiers she idolizes, whose comments, peppered through the book, are as clear an articulation of imperial logic as one could possibly imagine and make it hard to view the Canadian occupation as anything *but* imperialist. Reflecting the logic described by Razack above, Canadian soldier Ash Van Leeuwen tells Blatchford:

> We're not saving Afghanistan so that we can do free trade with them after; I mean, you can import rugs to Canada, but it's not an industrial country. We build infrastructure, provide education for children. The girls never had it. And it's not taking away from their culture; it's kind of showing they're being empowered. Look how long it took to get women's rights in North America, and we're in a country [Afghanistan] that's back two thousand years. It's like walking with people out of *National Geographic*.[833]

There is much to unpack in these statements. Clearly, Van Leeuwen had been prepared, presumably by his superior officers, to effectively deny the claim that Canada is motivated by economic concerns (though he either misunderstands or misdirects on the matter of how Canada takes advantage of free trade). He is also trained to speak to Canada's advancement of education and women's rights in Afghanistan, though his claims to that end are largely a fiction that is well dismantled in Klassen and Albo's work. His suggestion that Afghanistan "never had" infrastructure, education or a women's rights movement is simply inaccurate; indeed, as noted above, in the late 1970s

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[832] Jon Hamilton, quoted in Blatchford, *Fifteen Days*, p. 7. (Emphasis mine.)
[833] Ash Van Leeuwen, quoted in Blatchford, *Fifteen Days*, p. 62-63.

Afghanistan had a complicated political scene that came to be dominated by a secular left coalition that was accomplishing a great deal of what Van Leeuwen falsely attributes to the Canadian occupation.[834] But most telling is his conclusion that Afghans are "back two thousand years." That, in his mind, they have walked out of the pages of *National Geographic* is a disturbingly patent and straightforward articulation of colonialism that would, in fact, be right at home with the Rudyard Kiplings of a century ago.[835] This casual assertion that Afghans are obviously and essentially backwards, tribal, and pre-modern, speaks directly to the imperial character of Canada's occupation as manifest in its foot soldiers. If it looks like imperialism, functions like imperialism and is justified using imperial logic, it seems rather straightforward to assert that this is, indeed, imperialism.

It is the willingness of average Canadians – be they soldiers, policy-makers, or newspaper columnists – to more or less unabashedly declare itself an imperial power, with the caveat that Canadian imperialism is good and necessary, that should raise serious alarm bells for those Canadians who imagine themselves to be committed to social justice. Indeed, of all the further studies that this dissertation suggests, it seems the most urgent should be a re-assessment of Canadian social and political culture that takes seriously the notion that imperial politics, following Albert Memmi, change both the imperial power and the targets of its aggression: "for if colonization destroys the colonized, it also rots the colonizer."[836] The dramatic ruptures from human sociality that

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[834] Warnock, *Empire's Ally*, p. 43-73.

[835] This particular characterization fits into Edward Said's beautiful articulation of "Orientalism," or the creation of the colonized subject as something altogether different from the colonizer, an Other that is necessarily pre-modern and backwards but simultaneously mysterious and intriguing. Edward Said, *Orientalism*, New York, Vintage Books, 1994. See also Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, New York, Vintage Books, 1994.

[836] Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1991, p. xvii.

are required to justify colonization of another people, indeed, cause profound and sometimes existential harm even to colonizers themselves. As Aimé Césaire so astutely noted in 1955, the fascism that tore Europe asunder in the 1930s and 40s was a manifestation of colonialism come home.[837]

That imperialism represents a "highest stage" of capitalism – an argument that Lenin developed from Marx's gestures, late in his life, to the crucial role that colonialism played in the reproduction of capitalism – was, indeed, an argument that implied that imperialism signalled the *weakness* of the capitalist social order. While Lenin perhaps overemphasized the teleology that would see the capitalist powers turn to imperialism shortly before their inevitable downfall,[838] it is nevertheless instructive to note that imperialism is a tendency that is motivated by *desperation* to find new sources of profits; an expression of the manic logic of accumulation, it is desperate, rapacious, calculated and ruthless all at the same time, and it leads to the prioritizing of profits over every other normative concern. Marx and Engels poignantly describe the insecurity and mania – the spiritual illness – of trying to *be* imperial capital, in the *Communist Manifesto*:

> The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the entire surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connexions everywhere.[839]

It is, notably, need of capital that is doing the chasing; the would-be capitalists are the chased. While we should not necessarily feel sympathy for those who would align with capital to exploit others, it is worthwhile to consider the effects on a society that commits

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[837] Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, New York, Monthly Review Press, 1972.
[838] Arguably he emphasized these claims as part of the immediate political project of building the very revolutionary movements he hoped would imminently overthrow capitalism. V.I. Lenin, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, New York, International Publishers, 2002.
[839] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, Toronto, Penguin, 2002, p. 223.

itself, wholesale, to an inherently violent project and to ask what effects this will have on that society.

Canadian capitalists are, indeed, "chased" by the need to expand; as Thomas D'Aquino, former President of the Canadian Council of Chief Executives, noted, "Canada's leading players are all engaged actively in expansion abroad for the simple reason that Canada does not have enough room for them to achieve global scale."[840] The shift in Canada to an openly imperialist politics, then, renders impossible the prospects for Canada's promotion of a "less exploitative" global capitalist system and that, in turn, reflects back on Canada's domestic politics, which, themselves, are becoming increasingly unequal, exploitative and cruel. In the early 1990s, I was a student in the Canadian high school system, attending Canadian Studies classes that encouraged us to try to think through questions of "Canadian identity." We typically asserted that Canadian identity was rooted in being something different from the United States; that we were kinder, gentler, more thoughtful and more considerate, both as individuals and in the foreign policies of our country. However mythical this may have been, it is significant that the political moment required a citizenry who believed in that particular idea of Canada. Flash forward a decade or two, and Canadian identity is increasingly rooted in an aggressive patriotism; Canadians are encouraged by the state, by the media, by public institutions, in sporting spectacles, and increasingly by one another to loudly and proudly represent a bigger, stronger, tougher Canada.[841]

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[840] Thomas D'Acquino, quoted in Henry Heller, "Review of Todd Gordon, Imperialist Canada," *Historical Materialism* 20.2, 2012, p. 224.

[841] Examples range from beer commercials that forcefully assert the statement, "I am Canadian," to the 2010 Canadian Olympic slogan, "Own the Podium," to the near-constant hammering of the language of toughness and Canadian-ness in the presentation of professional hockey. For more on this see Tyler Shipley, "Pro-Sports, Anti-Olympics: Reclaiming the games, from the Games," *The Bullet*, No. 314,

Canadian culture, then, is undergoing a transformation requisite to the structural changes in the Canadian political economy that are manifesting visibly in the new Canadian imperialism. This transformation not only serves to ideologically sustain a Canadian state that behaves in profoundly different ways than it used to, it also complicates the picture of who gets to be included in "Canada." If Afghans are "two thousand years behind," where does that leave Afghan-Canadians? If Haiti is a "basket case" that should be thanking Canada for its intervention, are Haitian-Canadians the saviours or the saved? If Canada is exporting prosperity and development to Honduras, how do we address the Hondurans who spend half of their time working for less than minimum wages on Ontario farms as part of migrant worker programs, driven to this work by the utter lack of other opportunities in the Honduras that Canada is helping to create?

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, what does the new Canadian imperialism tell us about the original Canadian imperialism? The claim, noted in Chapter 2, that Canada has "no colonial history," is a remarkable denial of the genocide that marked Canada's origins, and it obscures the fact that the original colonization of Indigenous nations is an ongoing project that plays out in the daily, "domestic" politics of Canada. The new assertion of Canadian patriotism consistently finds expression in conflicts between Indigenous communities and white settlers; at the site of a land conflict in Southern Ontario, for instance, white settlers at Caledonia have mobilized counter-protests against Indigenous demonstrations in which they wave Canadian flags and sing

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February 19, 2010. Please see also Tyler Shipley, "The NHL and the New Canadian Militarism: National Game, International Shame" *Canadian Dimension*, Vol. 47, No. 4, July/August 2013.

"Oh Canada" at Indigenous protestors who quite rightly claim that the Canadian state is breaking the treaties it signed with them.[842]

Canada, then, is a settler colony that has blossomed into an imperial power, with a thread of colonial logic that connects its past to its present in a profoundly unflattering way. Canada's emergence since the Cold War as a full-fledged imperial power is rooted in shifts in the deeper political economy of Canada and it would be wrong to imagine that this change is simply a function of different people, different political parties, or different ideas; Canada's brief "peacekeeping moment" was not motivated solely by benevolence or some natural Canadian predisposition to "do good," even if many Canadians were and are well-intentioned and progressive. Nevertheless, it would be similarly wrong to assume that Canadian policy is wholly predetermined by political economic dynamics; activist organizing – whether in trade unions, in social movements, in civil society or elsewhere – can and has made an impact on Canadian politics in the past. Indeed, if there is any hope that Canadians can be a force for a better world, it is surely rooted in the prospects of those activist organizations gaining traction and, ultimately, provoking a rupture in the Canadian state that would radically transform the Canadian polity.

There is, then, inspiration to be taken from the Honduran social movements that were at the centre of this dissertation. In contrast to the colonial logic that sees Canada as the ideological guide for its colonial dominions to follow, Canadian social movements should be seeking to learn from and adapt movements like that in Honduras, which have mobilized around particular and immediate community needs with a vision of radically transforming the Honduran state. Indeed, when I interviewed Suzanne Dudziak, a key

[842] I've been present at Caledonia when this has happened, and have documented the events in photos. It has also been reported by the CBC and is currently written up at "Caledonia Update: Peace, Order and Good Government, eh?," May 23, 2006, available at: http://www.pogge.ca/archives/001135.shtml

activist in the Canadian-based Latin America Working Group (LAWG) in the 1980s, one of her strongest reflections on the success of that work was that the Canadian and Honduran movements learned from one another.[843] The setbacks that the current movement in Honduras has faced speak to the fact that the international capitalist class knows how to cooperate when it is under threat. The international working class has demonstrated that capacity in the past, and Canadian activists need to remember that past and re-engage with it; links between activists in the North and South have been fruitful in the past, as the experiences of LAWG demonstrate. It is my sincere hope that this dissertation can help to provide a framework for understanding the dynamics of this moment, with the aim of building stronger networks of collaboration and cooperation between the social movements confronting imperialism in Honduras, in Canada, and ultimately, throughout the world.

[843] Interview with Suzanne Dudziak, April 7, 2012.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Letter from Religious Women's Pilgrimage for Peace to Allan J. MacEachen, February 2, 1984.[844]

Right Honourable Allan J. MacEachen
Secretary of State for External Affairs
Department of External Affairs
Government of Canada
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0G2

Dear Mr. MacEachen,

We wish to acknowledge your letter of December 23, 1983 and to thank you for your detailed reply. We regret that your letter still leaves some basic questions unanswered, particularly regarding the nature of our visit, the Honduran security question, and our Canadian aid program. Our own recent personal experience with the Honduran government and our continuing concern for the people of Honduras prompts this reply to your letter. We would greatly appreciate your early response to this further inquiry.

Firstly, as members of the Religious Women's Pilgrimage for Peace we had planned for and committed several days to the specific purpose of prayer and witness for peace in Central America. Our purpose, which was known publicly through the media in Canada, the U.S., and Honduras before the pilgrimage began, was clear and pacific in intent. We would expect that your response to the actions of the Honduran government and to the issues raised in our letter would be clearly based on the peaceful and prayerful nature of our pilgrimage.

Our question remains, then, what the Canadian government will do in view of the obvious purpose of our visit and the actions taken by the Honduran authorities in not allowing us entry and the interpretation and gross distortion contained in their assertion that we are part of some "international communist conspiracy", that we intended to block roads and wreak internal havoc, that we are part of a Nicaraguan opposition movement opposing Archbishop Obando y Bravo, etc. Rather than dealing with the reasons for stopping a peaceful pilgrimage, it attacks our motivations and justifies their actions by referring to U.S. precedents for refusing entry for foreigners. As you may be aware, a similar Christian initiative for peace was undertaken earlier this past year where Canadians visited the Soviet Union and Washington making religious observances and exchanging views at the highest levels. In neither case were they refused entry. Several members of this earlier initiative also participated in our pilgrimage.

We, therefore, find it difficult to understand the extent to which your reply of December 23rd appears to give unquestioned credence to the Honduran communiqué. We regret that the tone of your letter and the apparent lack of further investigation seem to indicate that the interpretation of Honduran officials in their unfortunate statement is accepted by the

[844] Source: Latin American Working Group Archives, Scott Library, York University.

Canadian government as the truth of the matter. To your understanding, is it the position of the Honduran government to refuse entry to Christians of peaceful and prayerful intent? If it is, what is the response of the Canadian government to such a refusal? We would also like to know if the Canadian government has lodged a letter of complaint with the Government of Honduras for their refusal to permit entry to the pilgrimage. If this has not yet been done, we would like to know why not?

Secondly, we were interested in your remark concerning "grave threats to Honduras internal security" as a justification for the massive and unprecedented U.S. military involvement in that country. Could you please elaborate on the evidence for this? To our knowledge there have been no acts of aggression towards Honduras by any neighbouring country. Furthermore, it appears that apart from the Honduran and U.S. support of "contra" incursions into Nicaragua, the Honduran army intervened in El Salvador (June 1982), offers support and training to the Salvadorean army through CONDECA (Puerto Castillo) and consistently violated Nicaraguan territory and air space or lends its support for U.S. personnel to do so as evidenced recently in the helicopter incident on the Honduran-Nicaraguan border. We would thus like to understand the basis of your statement and if it represents a change in Canadian policy in favour of the U.S. buildup in Honduras and the U.S. assumption that peace will be won in the region by means of military force or threat of force?

Thirdly, our questions to you concerning the meaningfulness of Canadian aid in such a context remain unanswered. We would greatly appreciate an explanation of how the current Canadian aid program, particularly our government-to-government aid, is meeting the very basic and real needs of the Honduran people? This remains a very serious question for us and one of some urgency given current articles on the state of underdevelopment in that country and the real toll this is having on the vast majority who are the poor of Honduras. In light of the Honduran government's priority on military spending and the increase of human rights violations and internal repression, how does our aid program benefit the poor majority of Honduras?

Lastly, we share with you a sincere hope that the Contadora peace initiative will succeed and that political and not military solutions will be uppermost on the Canadian agenda for bringing peace to the region. We regret that recent news reports of the January Contadora meeting indicate that the Government of Honduras appears to be interested only in delaying and even diluting the progress made during 1983 on implementing the 21 points all countries agreed to. We would like to ask you what kind of effective support is Canada giving the initiative beyond your statements that the Contadora is a worthwhile process?

Again, we thank you for your response to our concerns and say that we look forward to your considered attention to the matters we have raised above.

Sincere wishes for peace in this New Year,

Yours Truly,

Sr. Marilyn Matz FCJ
Provincial Superior
Faithful Companions of Jesus – Canada

For the Religious Women's Pilgrimage for Peace

Sr. Murial Gallagher, Superior General Sisters of Providence, Kingston, ON

Sr. Fluerette, Sister of Providence

Ms. Marsha Sfeir, Board member, Ecumenical Forum of Canada

Ms. Roseanne Pellizzari, Catholic Laywoman and mother

Sr. Mary Jo Leddy, Provincial Coordinator, Sisters of Sion, Canada-USA Province

Mrs. Donna Sinclair, United Church Observer

Ms. Mary Thompson Boyd, National Office, United Church of Canada

Mrs. Jean Wright, Peace Network, United Church of Canada

Sr. Helen Zettle, representative of the School Sisters of Notre Dame

Sr. Suzanne Dudziak, Sister of Sion, Coordinator of the Canadian group of the Religious Women's Pilgrimage for Peace

Appendix B: Open Letter to Honduran President Rafael Callejas from Canadian civil society groups and individuals, early 1990s.[845]

ASESINATO DE LIDERES SINDICALES HONDURENOS PROVOCA GRAN DESILUSION E INDIGNACION EN CANADA

Los esfuerzos de los pueblos y gobiernos centroamericanos para traer la paz, democracía y justicia a sus patrias han sido observados con gran simpatía y esperanza por los canadienses. El traspaso reciente de la presidencia hondurenña, de un civil electo a otro de un partido politíco opositor, fue recibido en Canadá como un signo más de la consolidacion de instituciones democráticas en el istmo. Pero con profunda desilusión e indignación, nos enteramos de los asesinatos de los líderes sindicales Francisco Javier Bonilla y Ramón Antonio Briceño.

¿Qué significan las instituciones democráticas si no se mantienen el derecho a la libre organización y el estado de derecho? Cuando la violación de estos principios implica la tortura y el asesinato de líderes populares, es el deber de toda la comunidad de naciones de expresar su indignación y reclamar justicia.

Llamamos a Su Excelencia Presidente Rafael Leonardo Callejas a hacer todo lo que esté en su poder para traer a los asesinos a los tribunals de justicia, poniendo fin a la impunidad con la cual tales crímenes han sido cometidos hasta la fecha en Honduras, para romper con el legado de represión heredado de la oscura era de las dictaduras militares.

Lloyd Axworthy, Diputado Federal, Parlamento de Canada.

Bill Blaikie, Diputado Federal, Parlamento de Canada.

Dan Heap, Diputado Federal, Parlamento de Canada.

Stan Keyes, Diputado Federal, Parlamento de Canada.

Richard Allen, Diputado, Parlamento Provincial de Ontario.

John Addison, Alcalde, Dundas, Ontario.

Confederacion de Sindicatos Canadienses (CCU.)

Sindicato Nacional de la Industria Automovilistica, Aerospacio y de Implementos Agricolas del Canada (CAW.)

Sindicato Unido de Trabajadores del Acero de America – Division Canada (USWA.)

[845] Source: Latin American Working Group Archives, Scott Library, York University.

Sindicato Unido de Trabajadores de la Industria Electrica, Radio y Maquinaria del Canada (UE.)

Union Canadiense de Empleados Publicos (CUPE.)

Union Nacional de Empleados Gubernamente Provinciales (NUPGE.)

Appendix C - Excerpt from Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*:

The new Aureliano was a year old when the tension of the people broke with no forewarning. José Arcadio Segundo and other union leaders who had remained underground until then suddenly appeared one weekend and organized demonstrations in towns throughout the banana region. The police merely maintained public order. But on Monday night the leaders were taken from their homes and sent to jail in the capital of the province with two-pound irons on their legs. [...] They were set free, however, within three months because of the fact that the government and the banana companies could not reach an agreement as to who should feed them in jail. The protests of the workers this time were based on the lack of sanitary facilities in their living quarters, the non-existence of medical services, and terrible working conditions. They stated, furthermore, that they were not being paid in real money, but in scrip, which was only good to buy Virginia ham in the company commissaries. José Arcadio Segundo was put in jail because he revealed that the scrip system was a way for the company to finance its fruit ships, which without the commissary merchandise would have to return empty from New Orleans to the banana ports. The other complaints were common knowledge. The company physicians did not examine the sick but had them line up behind one another in the dispensaries and a nurse would put a pill the colour of copper sulphate on their tongues, whether they had malaria, gonorrhoea, or constipation. It was a cure that was so common that children would stand in line several times and instead of swallowing the pills would take them home to use as bingo markers. The company workers were crowded together in miserable barracks. The engineers, instead of putting in toilets, had a portable latrine for every fifty people brought to the camps at Christmastime and they held public demonstrations of how to use them so that they would last longer. The decrepit lawyers dressed in black who during other times had besieged Colonel Aureliano Buendía and who now were controlled by the banana company dismissed those demands with decisions that seemed like acts of magic. When the workers drew up a list of unanimous petitions, a long time passed before they were able to notify the banana company officially. As soon as he found out about the agreement, Mr. Brown [the company executive] hitched his luxurious glassed-in coach to the train and disappeared from Macondo along with the more prominent representatives of his company. Nonetheless, some workers found one of them the following Sunday in a brothel and they made him sign a copy of the sheet with the demands while he was naked with the woman who had helped to entrap him. The mournful lawyers showed in court that the man had nothing to do with the company and in order that no one doubt their arguments they had him jailed as an impostor. [...]

Tired of the hermeneutical delirium, the workers turned away from the authorities in Macondo and brought their complaints up to the higher courts. It was there that the sleight-of-hand lawyers proved that the demands lacked all validity for the simple reason that the banana company did not have, never had had, and never would have any workers in its service because they were all hired on a temporary and occasional basis. So that the fable of the Virginia ham was nonsense, the same as that of the miraculous pills and the Yuletide toilets, and by a decision of the court it was established and set down in solemn decrees that the workers did not exist.

The great strike broke out. Cultivation stopped halfway, the fruit rotted on the trees, and the hundred-twenty-car trains remained on the sidings. The idle workers overflowed the towns. The Street of the Turks echoed with a Saturday that lasted for several days and in the poolroom of the Hotel Jacob they had to arrange twenty-four-hour shifts. That was where José Arcadio Segundo was on the day it was announced that the army had been assigned to establish public order. [...]

Many years later that child would still tell, in spite of people thinking that he was a crazy old man, how José Arcadio Segundo had lifted him over his head, almost in the air, as if floating on the terror of the crowd, toward a nearby street. The child's privileged position allowed him to see at that moment that the wild mass was starting to get to the corner and the row of machine guns opened fire. Several voices shouted at the same time:

"Get down! Get down!"

The people in front had already done so, swept down by the wave of bullets. The survivors, instead of getting down, tried to go back to the small square, and the panic became a dragon's tail as one compact wave ran against another which was moving in the opposite direction, toward the other dragon's tail in the street across the way, where the machine guns were also firing without cease. They were penned in, swirling about in a giant whirlwind that little by little was being reduced to its epicentre as the edges were systematically being cut off all around like an onion being peeled by the insatiable and methodical shears of the machine gun. [...]

[The next day, Aureliano Segundo] read an extraordinary proclamation to the nation which said that the workers had left the station and had returned home in peaceful groups. The proclamation also stated that the union leaders, with a great patriotic spirit, had reduced their demands to two points: a reform of medical services and the building of latrines in the living quarters. It was stated later that when the military authorities obtained the agreement with the workers, they hastened to tell Mr. Brown and he not only accepted the new conditions but offered to pay for three days of public festivities to celebrate the end of the conflict. Except that when the military asked him on what date they could announce the signing of the agreement, he looked out the window at the sky crossed with lightning flashes and made a profound gesture of doubt.

"When the rain stops," he said. "As long as the rain lasts we're suspending all activities."

It had not rained for three months and there had been a drought. But when Mr. Brown announced his decision a torrential downpour spread over the whole banana region. It was the one that caught José Arcadio Segundo on his way to Macondo. A week later, it was still raining. The official version, repeated a thousand times and mangled out all over the country by every means of communication the government found at hand, was finally accepted: there were no dead, the satisfied workers had gone back to their families, and the banana company was suspending all activity until the rains stopped.

Martial law continued with an eye to the necessity of taking emergency measures for the public disaster of the endless downpour, but the troops were confined to quarters. During the day the soldiers walked through the torrents in the streets with their pant legs rolled up, playing with boats with the children. At night, after taps, they knocked doors down with their rifle butts, hauled suspects out of their beds, and took them off on trips from which there was no return. The search for and extermination of the hoodlums, murderers, arsonists and rebels of Decree No. 4 was still going on, but the military denied it even to the relatives of the victims who crowded the commandant's offices in search of news. "You must have been dreaming," the officers insisted. "Nothing has happened in Macondo, nothing has ever happened, and nothing will ever happen. This is a happy town." In that way they were finally able to wipe out the union leaders.

Gabriel García Márquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, p. 300-310.

Appendix D - Letter from Cuyamel Fruit Vice-President H.V. Rolston to company lawyer, 1920.

1. So that our great sacrifices and enormous investments will not have been made in vain, we must acquire and control as much national and private land as we can afford and absorb.

2. Our aim must be the enrichment of our company, and we must keep open every opportunity for new exploitation. In short, we must acquire as much land as our strategic interest requires, in order to guarantee our future growth and development and increase our economic power.

3. We must make our contract so tight that nobody can compete with us, not even in the distant future. Any business that becomes established must be under our control and adapt itself to our established principles.

4. We must obtain concessions, privileges, franchises, exemptions from obligations which might restrict our profits and those of our associates. We must put ourselves in a privileged position in order to impose our commercial philosophy and defend our economic interests.

5. It is necessary to cultivate the imagination of our local vassals and get them to accept the idea that we are going to get rich, and to do the same with politicians and the leaders we intend to use. Observations and careful study shows us that a people degraded by alcohol are easy to assimilate to our destiny and use. It is in our interest to take care that the privileged class bows to our will, because we need them for our exclusive benefit. Generally, men such as these have no principles, strength of character or patriotism; they yearn only for positions and reward, which lead them on to further appetite.

6. These men must not be allowed to act on their own initiative, but only in set circumstances under our immediate control.

7. We must break with friends who have been in our service but who we consider to have been weakened by loyalty to us; sooner or later they will betray us. We must distance ourselves without making them offended and treat them with deference even though we no longer use them. It is their country, their natural resources, their coast, their people we still need. Little by little we shall acquire them.

8. In general, all discussion and planning must turn on these words: power, wealth, work, discipline and method. We must proceed with subtlety, not risking to espouse principles or justify our claims to power. No acts of charity, no claims to notice, in short, nothing that might reveal our real intentions. If our projects end badly, we will develop a new strategy, be more modest, more simple, more "simpatico," even, perhaps, virtuous.

9. We must disrupt the growing economy of this country and increase its problems in order to favour our own aims. We must prolong its tragic, stormy life, plagued with revolution; the wind must blow only upon our sails and the waves wet only our keels.

10. We come, therefore, at an end. You know the men better than I do. When I arrive I will show you a list of the lands we must acquire, immediately where this is possible.

(Originally printed in Longino Becerra, *Evolucion Historica de Honduras*, p. 149-150. This translation taken from Alison Acker, *Honduras: The Making of a Banana Republic*, p. 65-66.)

Appendix E – Transcript of Interview with Edward Fox, Dec. 1, 2009.

Tyler Shipley: So, to start, can you just tell me who you are, what you were doing in Tegucigalpa, what your role was?

Edward Fox: My name is Edward Fox, I was an independent international observer, I came down last Friday, spent the last few days in Honduras – Sunday, of course, as an election observer in the Tegucigalpa area and the suburbs of the city.

TS: Ok, so can you give me your impressions of what happened on Sunday and the context around which happened.

EF: Yes, from, well, there are different levels of election. From the local level, I visited more than a dozen voting places, schools, several dozen tables. And the areas that I went into and visited personally were peaceful, were calm, there was a very positive nationalistic attitude. Every single voting area that I went to, people came up to me and thanked me for being there. I saw no protesting, I saw no indications of attempts to disrupt and intimidate, by either side, in fact no one even indicated their support for any of the major candidates. It was about the importance of the country of Honduras and what the individuals viewed as a national commitment to demonstrate that they could move forward with this election.

TS: So you didn't think that the militarization of the country, the militarization of voting stations, was problematic or intimidating in any way?

EF: No, I did not. I saw both police and military at each of these places. They did not interfere. They were not engaged in interacting with the public. They were there, for the most part, standing off to the side. At no time did I see them do anything that would be intimidating. As most people know, having the military involved in this is a normal part of the process. They are the organization which has the capability, the logistical ability to support this process. As a matter of fact, as of thirty days ago, they were no longer under the control of the President, they were under the control of the chairman of the Electoral Tribunal.

TS: So what about the human rights violations that have gone on since June 28? COFADEH, CODEH, and other human rights groups in Honduras have been documenting many cases of police brutality, beatings, kidnappings, disappearances, there have been thirty-two people killed – what is your sense of that and how that affected the election process?

EF: Well, it's, uh - it's outrageous if, in fact, there are human rights violations going on, by anybody. No doubt about that.

TS: You didn't speak to any of the human rights groups as part of the work of an observer?

EF: I, uh - in the schedule that I had, I was focused on the electoral process, not investigating the broader aspects of the political debate and dialogue in this country. However, I did *read* about those, I did prepare myself by going to meetings and going online and reading a lot of material before I came here. I've been aware of what's been going on in Honduras for a long time, I was an electoral observer in 1981, so this is not new to me, Latin America is not new to me and, quite frankly, the role of the military in whatever human rights violations here – I saw none of that and there may or may not be – I am not questioning and disputing that, that is not the purpose of my visit here. But I must tell you that it is not *confirmed* information, it is reports, and uh, I have not seen any evidence that would indicate that the crisis that happened here in June produced anything that – you know, as sad as it may be – that had anything to do with this election. The process was begun well over a year ago, the primary process, which was run while Zelaya was in the presidency, no one complained *then* about the process. Nobody questioned in the slightest the role of the tribunal and its legitimacy, and no one involved in the political crisis in June were [sic] on the ballot, were [sic] engaged in it, and uh, therefore, why one wanted to try to de-legitimize a constitutional processes [sic] in a *political* way, I did not see that, I did not believe that it was linked.

TS: Of course, there were a lot of people who said that the situation changed dramatically on June 28, a lot of those people were out in Tegucigalpa yesterday, thousands of people in the streets celebrating the fact that they didn't vote – the official results from the TSE stated that there were only 1.7 million people who voted in a country of over 8 million. Do you still, in that context, feel that the five days you had to observe the elections was enough? That is a huge degree of absenteeism in a country of 8 million.

EF: Oh sure – there's never enough time – you would have to spend all the time down here, so, do I wish I had more time? Sure. Would've I done more [sic]? Sure. But given the time that I had and relying – you know – I met with a variety of people including the U.S. ambassador and others, to discuss his view, and he's here *all the time.* And I felt comfortable with the information I received and the briefings I received that, on my own, I wasn't going to uncover anything in the last minute that would be dramatically different than the reports I had received from a variety of other people on those important issues.

TS: Right, so you spoke to the U.S. ambassador about human rights issues in Honduras, but you did not speak to local groups – COFADEH, CODEH, FIAN – the human rights groups that are in Honduras –

EF: - that's correct. No, I did not. That's correct -

TS: - and yet you didn't see that as a problem in terms of your ability to accurately, adequately and fairly judge the process?

EF: I didn't meet with the ambassador to talk about those things, I met with him to talk about the electoral process, and we had an opportunity – and if I had had an opportunity I would have talked to them, I normally try to do that, this time I did not. So it's not that I was excluding that, it's that where I had an opportunity and when I had time, I raised those kinds of issues. So, I think it's an important thing, but I, you know, the United States had not been an enthusiastic supporter of what happened here, so I don't know why they would be covering up things! So I thought that was a good thing to do – find the ambassador who has been very critical of a lot of things, let him tell me what they are. But he did not – in his list of things that concerned him – he did not make human rights violations, murders, rapes, he did not indicate that that was verifiable or part of a major concern that the United States had.

TS: So, thirty-two people have been killed since the coup, perhaps you weren't aware –

EF: - you say that. I don't know that to be a fact. Nobody else has given me that information; I haven't had it verified by any authoritative sources.

TS: But I thought a lot of the observers were at the TSE on Saturday, when the five leading human rights groups in Honduras actually presented a document that detailed all of this, gave it to the TSE, and launched a formal complaint against the elections, precisely on these grounds. I'm very surprised that you, as an observer, wouldn't have come into this information.

EF: Well, I arrived late on Friday, late Friday afternoon, I did not attend that particular session, if they were there, I didn't know about it. I came down here to try and look at the electoral process, because I believed that the way it was being put forward was critical for this country to be able to make a decision – when you have a crisis, whether you believe that what happened to President Zelaya was horrible, or correct, how do you move forward from there? Even *he* indicated that his term of office is over in a month. So what's the best thing to go forward? That's to have an election! To allow people to vote and select a new leader! That's what I saw and that's what they did.

TS: And yet, so many people have been saying for so many months that the solution was a constitutional assembly, to rewrite, reform the constitution –

EF: - no, no, no, that was overwhelmingly *rejected!*

TS: Well no, it wasn't actually even put to a vote, because the day that the first non-binding vote was supposed to happen, there was a military coup. So it hasn't been voted on.

EF: Uh, well, uh - you call it a coup, I don't believe it was a coup. The civilians in charge of both branches of government, uh, overwhelmingly - first of all, they told President Zelaya repeatedly that he was not following the mandates of the court and congress, told him not to do things and he insisted on doing things, and then they issued,

uh – look, I don't have time for this, you've made up your mind, good for you. My bags are here and I have to go. Maybe you should move to Venezuela if you love Chavez so much.

Appendix F – Open Letter Published by MiningWatch Canada from Honduran Civil Society Groups in Opposition to Proposed Mining Law, Tuesday, January 24, 2012

Tegucigalpa, Honduras

The below signed organizations alert the Honduran people to the National Congress' decision to approve a proposed mining law, written by the National Congress' Legislative Commission led by deputy Donaldo Reyes Avelar for disrespecting the demands that the citizens of this country have been making in this regard for the last decade.

Our organizations have demanded that the commission create space for debate and discussion such that a collective process may take place to develop a mining law with real citizen participation and in which the rights of campesino and indigenous populations would be privileged, protected and guaranteed, along with the conservation and protection of the environment and, above all, that the right of communities to determine their own development be respected.

With regard to our demands, the Mining Commission informed us on Monday January 16th that the ruling on the mining bill was finished and that they had committed themselves to hand it in to the President of Congress before the end of the current legislative session, given that they were under *"enormous pressure from investors."* They also indicated that they were predisposed to meet with social organizations, environmentalists and human rights defenders to inform them about its contents, which was contrary to our demand for active and effective citizen participation.

Upon reviewing the proposed law that we received from the Mining Commission, we find that its content is more damaging than the current law, which it tries to rectify, in continuation with the servile way in which our riches have been handed over to national and foreign investors, behind the backs of the Honduran people.

This proposed law developed by the Mining Commission behind closed doors seriously violates the territorial, cultural, and spiritual rights of indigenous and afro-descendent peoples, as well as their full and legitimate right to autonomy and rights under Convention 169 of the International Labour Organization, revealing its colonialist and racist intent to exterminate original peoples.

This proposed law also attempts to:

1. Continue promoting open-pit mining,
2. Open the door not just for multinational corporations, but also for foreign governments to become title owners of mining concessions,
3. Fail to guarantee and protect access to water for communities, privileging its use by the mining industry, in an open violation of the human right to water,
4. Ensure, within the context of creating incentives for investments, the validity of tax loopholes so that companies don't pay taxes,

5. Reduce requirements for granting of mining concessions, paving the way for investors and making it difficult for communities to defend their natural resources,
6. Reduce and eliminate the majority of reasons for which mining concessions can be cancelled, which coincides with content of an earlier bill that was being debated,
7. Restrict and impede access to information regarding mining activities, deeming this information (technical and financial) as confidential and only available to the mining authority,
8. Only consider binding community consultation under exceptional circumstances and not as a general norm. Also, the consultation process is only established for production licenses, which entails the automatic granting of concessions given the potential lawsuits that companies could bring against the state [presumably under free trade agreements or other investment protection agreements],
9. Promote administrative silence as an expedited way to approve requests that mining companies make.

But the principal trap within the proposed Mining Law is found in Article 103, which reads: "Upon approval of this law, those applications which are currently in process will continue to be processed through to completion under the law in place when they were submitted, without prejudice to the revision, evaluation and rectification which these applications could entail."

This means that the more than 300 mining projects that have still not been approved, which were suspended by Executive Decree, will be processed under the current mining law. This is the same law that was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court of Justice. This disposition contradicts article 105 of the proposed mining law, which revokes Legislative Decree 292-98 that contains the General Mining Law. As such, the proposed law hands the whole country over to the mining companies so that they can destroy it as they like.

Given this situation, we call upon social organizations, environmentalists, indigenous and afro-descendant peoples, and human rights organizations, to express their repudiation, rejection and condemnation of the contents of this proposed law, as well as of those deputies that are trying to make a fool of the Honduran people by acting in the interests of multinational mining companies and not of their own people, whom they are constitutionally mandated to serve.

We also demand that the President of the National Congress respond to our insistence that space be created for public debate and creation of a mining law that is truly patriotic, that incorporates the demands and proposals of the people, and not to carry out a simple information process as the mining commission has done.

The indigenous peoples who sign this declaration, signal that if this law is approved, we will not recognize this law nor what takes place by extension, nor those who approve it. We also make clear that with this law or without it, we have the right to self-

determination and dignity, and are not prepared to accept our own death and the continuation of colonialism.

Finally, we conclude that if this law is approved behind closed doors and behind the backs of the Honduran people, the National Congress and the deputies of the Mining Commission will be those responsible for the social conflict that this will generate, when the Honduran people exercise their rights to the defense of their territory, the protection of the environment and the protection and safeguarding of life, and the integrity of people and their goods.

Tegucigalpa, Honduras, January 24, 2012.

Honduran Centre for the Promotion of Community Development (CEHPRODEC)
Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH)
Civic Alliance for Democracy (ACD)
Committee for the Defence of the Flora and Fauna of the Gulf of Fonseca (CODEFFAGOLF)
Regional Environmental Committee of the Siria Valley
National Association for the Promotion of Ecological Agriculture (ANAFAE)
Centre for Investigation and Promotion of Human Rights (CIPRODEH)
The Santa Barbara Environmental Movement (M.A.S.)
Madre Tierra Association
Association of Non Governmental Organizations (ASONOG)
Popol Nah Tun Foundation
Environmental Network of the Municipalities of Comayagua and La Paz (REDAMUCOP)
Fundambiente
Association of Environmentalist and Agro-Forestry Journalists (AHPAAF)
Network of Nature Defence Committees of Choluteca and Valle
National Roundtable on Advocacy for Risk Management (member of the steering committee of SINAGER)
Committee of Journalists for Life and the Freedom of Expression
Environmental Defence Committee of the Guisayote Reserve
Honduran Ecumenical Institute for Community Service (INHESCO)
National Network of Mine Affected Communities
Defence Committee of the Rights of the Indigenous People of Yamaranguila (COPRODEDPIY)

Appendix G – Open Letter from Honduran Women's Collective, CODEMUH

Choloma, Cortés, August 12, 2011

TO:
The Right Honourable Stephen Joseph Harper, Prime Minister of Canada;
Mr. Porfirio Lobo Sosa, President of Honduras;
Mr. Africo Madrid, Secretary of State for the Interior;
The International Community;
Especially to the Honduran people:

The Honduran Women's Collective, CODEMUH, has continually and systematically produced information about the vulnerable position faced by workers in the maquila industry in Honduras, about the violation of human and labour rights, and the damages done to the health of workers by their work activities, especially in the company Gildan Activewear, a transnational company owned by Canadians. This information has been given to governments and the entities responsible for labour law enforcement in Honduras; national and international social movements and organizations; human rights protection systems; and the Fair Labour Association (FLA).

We have taken our cases to judicial bodies, both national and international, using legal channels in a responsible way. We have used international and inter-American systems, investigating, documenting, informing, publicizing, raising awareness and presenting proposals so that the entities responsible for applying justice would act. These entities should implement monitoring, follow up and prevention actions for effective protection that ensures human and labour rights for the working population. In addition, we have alerted these bodies to the fact that Gildan Activewear is violating the Constitution of the Honduran Republic and other labour laws, by implementing long work days and a system of unachievable production quotas.

Prime Minister Harper, there have been constant reports of Canadian company Gildan Activewear's anti-organizing and anti-union policies, among other labour violations. For example, Gildan El Progreso in Honduras closed in 2004 to avoid the certification of a union, and recently in the Dominican Republic there have been reports of the same policies with regards to the trade union there. Other reports have surfaced of violations of other human and labour rights of workers, such as the right to live without violence, the right to work, health and life.

Presently, Gildan Activewear is contravening the legal regulations for labour, with regards to treaties and international conventions that protect occupational health and safety, by implementing 4x4 shifts in their factories, where workers work for 4 days straight, 11.5 hours per day, and then have 4 days off. With this system, it's common that on their days off, workers do extra hours, up to 2 day shifts or 2 night shifts. This means that the work week can be 69 hours long, with a salary of $89.99 US Dollars (L$1700 Lempiras) per week.

The production goals or quotas imposed by Gildan Activewear are the highest in the industry in Honduras. To earn $89.99 per week, workers have to produce 550 dozen pieces every day, and are exposed to awkward postures, executing up to 40,000 repetitive movements in their joints, tendons, and muscles per day. These conditions produce Occupational Musculoskeletal Injuries (MSI). There is clear exploitation of workers in poor countries, juxtaposed with reporting that sales have been high during the 2011 fiscal year. In Honduras, Gildan does not pay taxes because they are exempt, so it is absurd when we see that a company with such a high level of exploitation of the work force has been applauded as one of the 50 best Canadian corporations and one of the 20 most responsible companies.

Based on these problems, workers from Gildan Activewear who are members of CODEMUH have presented proposals, and have asked the national authorities of the Labour and Social Security Secretariat to doan ergonomic inspection and evaluation of the textile and clothing manufacturing companies. CODEMUH has also presented thematic reports to the Inter-American Human Rights Commission and the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Rights to Highest Attainable Standard of Physical, Mental Health. We have also presented a complaint to the Fair Labour Association, denouncing the dangerous conditions for safety, hygiene, lack of ergonomics and work organization, low salaries, lack of pay for overtime and other benefits, as well as discrimination and workplace harassment.

CODEMUH has received complaints from more than 100 workers at Gildan Activewear. Of this group, 20 workers have rulings for a change in workstations, recommending a prohibition of repetitive movements in their shoulders, lifting their arms above shoulder level, alternating seated and standing postures, and performance of exercises every 2 hours. As well, 15 workers have received rulings qualifying their Occupational Risks with a Partial Damage Percentage given as a result of an occupational injury, all of them with MSIs. These rulings have been given by the Honduran Social Security Institute. This shows that work conditions and work organization damage the health of workers, especially with relation to the length of the work day and production goal system.

Given these facts, Mr. Prime Minister, and considering that your visit to Honduras is to promote a bilateral Free Trade Agreement between Honduras and Canada, we propose the following:

1. The Free Trade agreements that Honduras has signed with "first world" or "developed" countries, especially North American countries, have only brought higher levels of discrimination, labour exploitation, accidents and occupational illnesses, as well as making the working population poorer, especially young women.

2. Free Trade Agreements are conceived and designed fundamentally so that transnational companies and their registered brands can exploit the working population and produce huge profits, totally oblivious to the fact that in order to

obtain their production and profits, there are people, women and men, who risk their lives, and that there are labour and human rights laws that must be respected.

We demand that you ask promptly for a report on labour and human rights conditions for the women and men who work at Gildan Activewear installations in Honduras; and that the Canadian government monitors working conditions for workers with Canadian transnationals. The Canadian government must force companies to comply with national laws, international conventions and international treaties to do with human and labour rights and corporate social responsibility. As well, companies must perform ergonomic studies of work stations with the active participation of workers and organizations with experience in occupational health and safety, such as CODEMUH, with the objective of correcting any deficiencies.

Taking into account that for Honduras, Free Trade Agreements have meant higher levels of exploitation, of labour and human rights violations, loss of job sources, higher labour risks, deepening of poverty and other problems: we denounce and condemn that Honduras is proceeding to ratify a bilateral Free Trade Agreement with Canada without even studying the impacts of CAFTA.

Jobs Yes, BUT WITH DIGNITY!

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LIST OF INTERVIEWS[846]

[846] This list contains only the interviews which are directly cited in the text. I conducted several other interviews which did not find their way directly into the dissertation, and those I have chosen not to list.

Felix Molina, November 24, 2009.

Felix Molina, November 25, 2009.

Luis Aguilar, November 26, 2009.

Jari Dixon, November 26, 2009.

Bertha Oliva, November 26, 2009.

José Trinidad Sánchez, November 28, 2009

Victor Corrales Mejía, November 29, 2009.

Edward Fox, Dec. 1, 2009.

Jesse Freeston, August 23, 2011.

Edwin Espinal, August 24, 2011.

Alison Acker, February 10, 2012.

John Foster, February 18, 2012.

George Sorger, February 24, 2012.

Chris Rosene, March 9, 2012.

Suzanne Dudziak, April 7, 2012.

Felix Molina, May 2, 2012.

Joni Rivas, May 3, 2012.

Pedro Landa, May 4, 2012.

Nectali Rodezno, May 4, 2012.

Andrea Nuila, May 4, 2012.

Juan Almendares, May 4, 2012.

Edwin Espinal, May 5, 2012.

Gladys Lanza, May 7, 2012.

Gilberto Rios, May 8, 2012.

Carlos Amador, May 8, 2012.

Rassel Tomé, May 9, 2012.

Tomás Andino, May 9, 2012.

Juan Barahona, May 10, 2012.

Victor Meza, May 10, 2012.

Annie Bird, May 10, 2012.

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